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# Naval Special Warfare 21 : an analysis of organizational change in the 21st century

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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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# THESIS

**NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE 21: AN ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

by

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and
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December 2001

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Can we ever *truly* understand what motivates us to act in particular ways? Can we draw inferences from our understanding of the actions of one to explain the behaviors of many? Can we ever hope to develop broad theories that make human behavior comprehensible? This thesis is inclined to say no. However, this "no" is only a tentative answer. Throughout this thesis we will discuss, observe, and analyze these questions of human behavior in the context of organizational theory: a discipline that is essentially a study of how humans act when they group themselves into bureaucratic organizations. In this thesis, we will use Naval Special Warfare and its NSW-21 transformation effort as an example of how an organization can change, *even when* that change seems to go against the grain of popular wisdom.

We have approached this thesis from the perspective of a curious workman who has just opened the back of a clock to see what makes the timepiece tick. As we analyze what makes Naval Special Warfare tick, we will tell the story of the NSW-21 transformation. In this work, we seek to satisfy three objectives: 1) to provide a broad understanding of NSW-21 and its implications, 2) to explain why NSW-21 was a smart move for the Naval Special Warfare community, and 3) to use Naval Special Warfare's recent transformation endeavors as a means to understand how and why groups must organize, reorganize, and transform themselves in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Essentially, this thesis can be boiled down to one simple question: "Why does the NSW-21 transformation make sense for Naval Special Warfare?"

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# NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE 21: AN ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. PURPOSE

When we first began to collaborate on and discuss how to write a thesis about NSW-21, the Naval Special Warfare community's recent transformation effort, we only had a rough idea about how we were going to tackle the subject. After many failed attempts at organizing our thoughts into words and our words into a coherent story about NSW-21, we finally settled on a methodology that has as much to do with mainstream organizational theory as it does with deductive logic and plain common sense. The central question that this thesis seeks to address, and one that we had a hard time answering while attempting to analyze NSW-21 through the lenses of mainstream organizational models, is "Why did Naval Special Warfare embark on a reorganization effort that consciously sought to centralize and standardize the community when, according to many theorists, the corporate and political worlds are increasingly moving in a direction of decentralization and diversification?"

In order to fully understand the focus of this research question, one needs only to analyze it in the context of the current pop-culture parlance. Such bold proclamations as "the dawn of the information era," "revolution in military and business affairs", and the greatly trumpeted notion of "network-centric operations" are all examples of an almost divine belief in humanity as species that evolves thanks to our technological prowess: a technological prowess that periodically allows us to break away from our traditional notions of form and structure. But if this *is* our future, then why would a cutting-edge special operations force such as Naval Special Warfare take a step that seems to be in the opposite direction. In other words, why has Naval Special Warfare, at the dawn of the information age, embraced an organizational strategy whose form and structure is much more reminiscent of the industrial age?

At face value, the answer to this question is simple: Naval Special Warfare made a mistake when it adopted NSW-21. If only this conclusion were true, then our task of writing this thesis would be much easier. We would merely have to point out the flaws in the logic behind NSW-21, analyze why that logic is so misguided, and suggest an

organizational strategy of our own to fix the problem. However, Naval Special Warfare did not make a mistake when it adopted NSW-21. In fact, the community made a bold and shrewd move that will probably maintain and sustain the relevance of maritime special operations long into the future. As one SEAL Team commanding officer put it, when asked about the reason for the transformation, "NSW-21 isn't about doing our job well; it is about doing it better." Nevertheless, even granted that NSW-21 is a step in the right direction for the Naval Special Warfare community, the question that we posed above remains relevant. How does one reconcile the seeming paradox between the NSW-21 transformation and the transformative effects of the information age?

The short answer to this question is that a paradox is only a paradox when one looks for the answer in the wrong place. Therefore, why NSW-21's centralized and standardized goals and objectives do not seem to mesh with the current political, corporate, and American belief that the world is increasingly moving towards an era of flatter hierarchies and smaller bureaucracies is a question that cannot be answered simply by comparing Naval Special Warfare's old organizational strategy to NSW-21. Although such a comparison is included in this thesis and is crucial for fully understanding the NSW-21 transformation, we must also use a broader analytical framework to do NSW-21 justice.

## B. PEERING THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

The framework by which we have chosen to analyze NSW-21, which incidentally is also the framework that led us to discover numerous dead ends, dark alleys, and wasted days while researching, compiling, and writing this thesis, is based on organizational theorist Henry Mintzberg's model of organizational structures. Mintzberg's framework—which, according to organizational theorists, represents a structural frame of reference—provides a relatively simple and logical way to understand how and why organizations organize themselves in particular ways. When applied to NSW-21, Mintzberg's model predicts the very paradox that we described above and, in turn, leads to one of two conclusions: either NSW-21 was a bad idea, or one of the premises of Mintzberg's model is flawed. Since our research has led us to the conclusion that NSW-21 was not a bad idea, there must be a flaw somewhere in Mintzberg's logic.

The reader may be wondering, "Why would we use a model that we know is flawed?" The answer to this question is akin to the answer that Jesus gave the Pharisees when they asked him why he surrounded himself with prostitutes and criminals: we should always try to right something that is wrong. There is good in Mintzberg's model, and just because a part of his framework may be flawed does not mean that his model is completely worthless. Therefore, we will spend some time in Chapter II distilling and explaining Mintzberg's model, as well as discussing which premise we disagree with, why we disagree with it, and how it can be modified to strengthen his model and help us answer our research question. Although we will use Mintzberg's model, the way in which we interpret and apply it will be quite different than how Mintzberg intended it to be used. Our reinterpretation of Mintzberg not only calls into question the nature of the paradox we have already discussed, but also the notion that the information revolution, or any human revolution for that matter, is a linear event. Although these claims may sound bold, if not somewhat cryptic, their meanings should become clearer in the ensuing pages as the story of NSW-21 unfolds.

## C. ORGANIZING A THESIS ON BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS

We have organized this thesis into five chapters: the first of which you are reading now. Chapter II begins with a discussion of Mintzberg. We will first lay out Mintzberg's argument, how he organized it, and what conclusions he drew from it. The bulk of the discussion in the beginning of this chapter concerns three main aspects of Mintzberg's argument at which we have chosen to look. These three aspects of organizational theory all focus on Mintzberg's general question of how organizations organize to accomplish a specific set of tasks or mission. The first assertion is that groups adopt a particular organizational strategy according to the complexity of the tasks they need to perform, given the mission they are trying to accomplish, and the dynamism of their operating environment. The second assertion is that the organizational strategy a group adopts determines the vertical and lateral lines of communication within the organization. And the third assertion is that the world is becoming increasingly more complex and dynamic. This final assertion is perhaps the one we take issue with the most. Even though Mintzberg does not explicitly argue that any one organizational strategy is superior to another, his model, which frames different organizational strategies according to the

complexity of tasks and the dynamism of the environment, predicts that certain organizational strategies are superior to others under certain circumstances. Although we do not have a problem with this argument, we do have a problem with the presupposition that the world is becoming more complex and dynamic, or at least more complex and dynamic in the manner in which Mintzberg views. By claiming that the world is becoming more complex and dynamic in a particular way, Mintzberg favors certain organizational strategies over others. Here is where we part ways with Mintzberg. We will argue that even if the world is becoming more complex and dynamic in the way Mintzberg claims, this presumed fact does not promote any one organizational strategy over another.

In Chapter II we discuss, define, and explain Mintzberg's notions of complex tasks and dynamic environments, how these notions relate to his five components of an organization (strategic apex, middle line, technostructure, support staff, and operating core), and how his premises and his five components form the basis for organizing a group into a simple structure, a machine bureaucracy, a divisional bureaucracy, a professional bureaucracy, or an adhocracy. The chapter then proceeds with a critique of Mintzberg's interpretation of dynamic environments. Although Mintzberg does not use the term environmental dynamism, this term is essentially what he means when he argues that one of the main factors organizations consider when they adopt a particular organizational strategy is how competitive (in the case of a corporation) or hostile (in the case of a military unit at war) the operating environment is. According to Mintzberg, organizational strategies develop to satisfy two things: a spectrum of tasks that range from simple to complex and an environment that ranges from stable to dynamic. Though common sense dictates that Mintzberg's premises are correct, we will argue that common sense and deductive logic also dictate that his concept of an environment as more or less stable or dynamic is somewhat flawed. In the latter half of Chapter II, we shall argue that Mintzberg excludes dynamism within an organization and among people in an organization. We believe this has as much to do with a group's reorganization and transformation efforts as does the dynamism in the organization's external environment. We conclude Chapter II with a discussion and explanation of how we have modified Mintzberg's notion of environmental dynamism to include one of directed motion.

In Chapter III we apply Mintzberg's reinterpreted model to Naval Special Warfare's old organizational strategy. We begin the chapter by discussing and explaining how the complexity of Naval Special Warfare's tasks and directed motion in a discrete dynamic environment compelled the community to originally adopt a divisional bureaucratic organizational strategy. We will then describe and explain how Naval Special Warfare coordinated itself vertically and laterally under this divisional bureaucratic structure, and analyze the challenges that the divisional bureaucratic structure posed to the community. We will conclude Chapter III by explaining how NSW-21 represents a logical step in the right direction for the community.

Chapter IV will focus on how vertical and lateral lines of communication have changed under NSW-21, what Naval Special Warfare's new organizational strategy looks like in terms of Mintzberg's five organizational strategies, and how NSW-21 has transformed itself, through measured centralization and standardization, into a leading special operations force of the 21st century. Chapter IV begins with a discussion about what NSW-21 is and what it is not. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the five initiatives that constitute NSW-21: 1) developing the NSW squadron concept, 2) restructuring the force, 3) realigning training, 4) optimizing command and control relationships for deployed forces, and 5) developing an NSW command and control infrastructure. As we will demonstrate, when taken together, these five initiatives constitute a transformation of the Naval Special Warfare force that transcends a mere reorganization of the individuals and assets within the community. We conclude Chapter IV by revisiting our initial question and, explaining why—given Naval Special Warfare's operating environment—NSW-21 makes sense.

In Chapter V we consider some of the implications of NSW-21. When we first began to mull over some of the likely impacts of the transformation, we, like most frogmen, immediately focused on what we thought was bad about the plan. Fortunately, through our research, we discovered that those responsible for designing and implementing NSW-21 had already thought through many of the same issues, and devised a game plan to address them. Still, we raise three potential sources of friction that we feel the reader should be made aware of. We then conclude our discussion about the potential unintended consequences of NSW-21 by considering the two implications of

the transformation that we believe pose the greatest danger to Naval Special Warfare's overall combat effectiveness and unconventional mindset.

In Chapter V, we also summarize our argument, and explain why, when studying bureaucratic organizations or the people that constitute them, no one general theory can make sense of the whole story. We concede that our reinterpreted version of Mintzberg's model is just one way in which we can interpret Naval Special Warfare and the NSW-21 transformation. In our view, no reorganization or transformation should be viewed as an end in itself. These endeavors represent but a few more steps in an on-going journey. Although a full understanding of where this journey will lead is impossible, an adequate understanding of the organization and the people who constitute it is critical to at least putting us on the right path.

## D. WHAT THIS THESIS IS NOT

This thesis does not critique the decision to adopt NSW-21 or criticize the different ways in which NSW-21 is being implemented by Naval Special Warfare Groups ONE and TWO. This thesis also does not analyze the decision-making processes of Naval Special Warfare's leadership. Instead, the end-state of this project is three-fold: 1) to provide a broad understanding of NSW-21 and its implications, 2) to explain why, given careful analysis, NSW-21 was a smart move for the Naval Special Warfare community, and 3) to use Naval Special Warfare's recent transformation endeavors as a means of understanding how and why groups that focus on specific missions, must organize, periodically reorganize, and transform themselves in order to meet the challenges of an often uncertain future.

These objectives are broad and ambitious, and we cannot possibly address all the relevant issues raised by the NSW-21 transformation in this thesis. However, this work should aid in establishing a foundation for discussing, analyzing, and understanding not only Naval Special Warfare, but also similar organizations and their organizational strategies. We realize that some of the things we will discuss depart from mainstream organizational theory. However, we offer this explanation of Naval Special Warfare and the NSW-21 transformation not to discredit anyone else's work, but rather in the spirit of

our own organization, which prides itself on interpreting the world and adapting ideas in new and innovative ways.

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# II. A REINTERPRETATION OF AN OLD IDEA: MINTZBERG'S FIVE STRUCTURES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MOTION

## A. UNDERSTANDING MINTZBERG

Henry Mintzberg's model of organizational design, which is derived from his seminal work, Structures in Five: Designing Effective Organizations, attempts to describe how organizations organize themselves according to their tasks and their environments. Mintzberg argues that all groups self-organize according to the complexity of their tasks and the dynamism of their environment. To Mintzberg, task-organization takes place along a spectrum from simple to complex. Naturally, a cleaning service, whose mission is cleaning hotel rooms, will adopt a radically different organizational strategy than will a law firm. Essentially, the more complex the tasks that the individuals in the operating core are required to perform, the more professional and, therefore, the more decentralized and diversified the organization becomes.

Nevertheless, task organization is only one dimension of Mintzberg's model. His second premise is that the dynamic of the environment in which the organization operates also influences which organizational strategy a particular organization chooses to adopt. To Mintzberg, environmental dynamism ranges from stable to dynamic. In terms of the corporate world, for instance, a stable environment is a munificent environment in which there is very little competition between businesses. For a military unit, stability would be synonymous with peace. In other words, stability is found in prosperity and peace, while dynamism and intense competition go hand in hand. These two notions of complexity of tasks and environmental dynamism, according to Mintzberg, can be combined to create four categories that can be used to classify all organizations. These four categories, which are depicted in Figure 2.1, are the bedrock of Mintzberg's five organizational strategies.[1]

[1] Although Mintzberg does not use the term organizational strategy (instead he favors the term organizational structure), organizational strategy should be considered synonymous with organizational structure within the context of this thesis. We prefer the term organizational strategy because how a unit organizes itself into an organizational hierarchy reflects a plan intended to accomplish a specific goal. The term structure refers to a tangible entity, while the word strategy refers to a theoretical construct. In this thesis, we are not so much concerned with what actually exists, as we are with what a planner believes should logically exist.

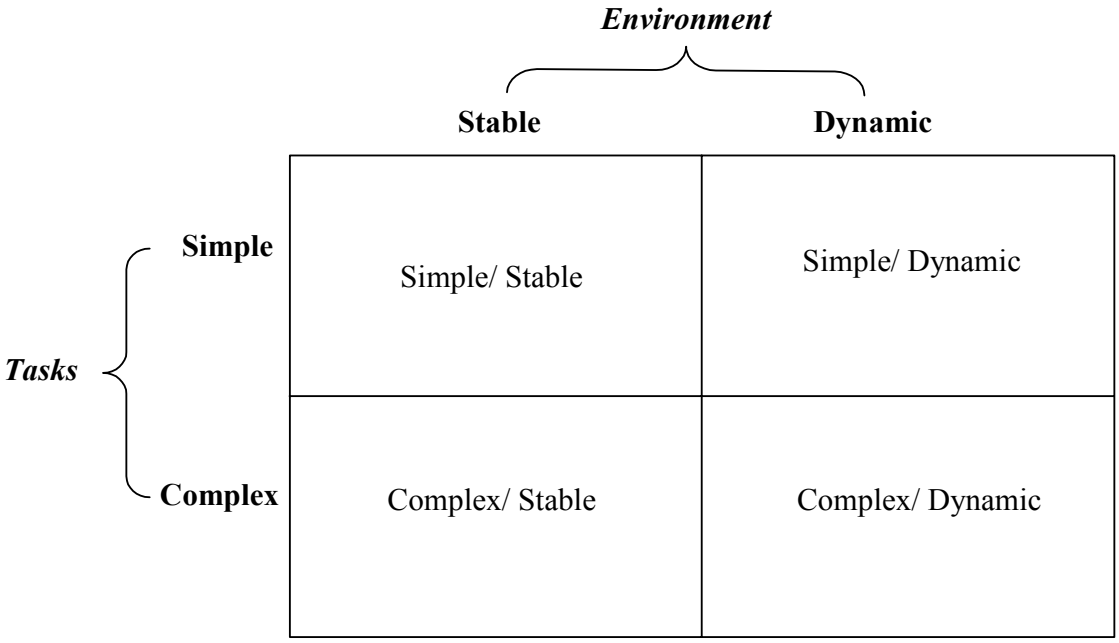


Figure 2.1. Mintzbergs's Four Organizational Categories.

Each of Mintzberg's four categories, simple/stable, simple/dynamic, complex/stable, and complex/dynamic, has associated with it a particular organizational strategy that best suits its conditions. However, all organizations—regardless of their organizational strategy—have, in one fashion or another, the following five components: a strategic apex, a middle line of management, a technostructure, a support staff, and an operating core. Basically, Mintzberg's five organizational strategies are, in fact, nothing more than five different ways to organize these five basic components into an organization that is capable of succeeding in the unique conditions determined by one of the four categories mentioned above. Although we generally agree with the five organizational strategies that Mintzberg developed, we do not necessarily agree with the four categories that he uses as the basis for these organizational strategies. As we shall discuss later in this chapter, the dichotomy that Mintzberg has created between a stable and dynamic environment is too simple to adequately explain the bureaucratic phenomena of organization and reorganization. Nevertheless, we would be remiss if we did not offer a brief description of Mintzberg's five components of an organization, how

these components are combined to form an organizational strategy, and how Mintzberg's five organizational strategies relate to the four categories in Figure 2.1. Thus, we ask the reader to bear with us as we enter the theoretical forest.

### 1. Mintzberg's Five Components of an Organization

#### *a. The Strategic Apex*

According to Mintzberg, the strategic apex is "charged with ensuring that the organization serves its mission in an effective way, and also that it serves the needs of those who control or otherwise have power over the organization" (Mintzberg, p. 13). If an organization were a living entity, then the strategic apex would be its brain. The strategic apex is the organization's equivalent of a central nervous system. It is within the strategic apex that boards meet and admiralties plan. The strategic apex is the component of the organization that is responsible and accountable for formulating the organization's vision, thinking through what the organization's mission is (and should be), developing a strategy to accomplish that mission, and directing the motion of the resources within the organization towards that end. Like the synapses firing every second in the human brain, the strategic apex makes decisions concerning how the organization should organize its tasks and communicates those decisions to the other components of the organization.

#### *b. The Middle Line*

"The strategic apex is joined to the operating core by the chain of middle-managers with formal authority. This chain runs from senior managers to first line supervisors, who have direct authority over the operators" (Mintzberg, p.14). According to Mintzberg, the middle line is equivalent to middle management. When one considers the middle line, one may conjure up images of Charlie Sheen's portrayal of a stock broker in Oliver Stone's "Wall Street," or the psychotic mergers and acquisitions broker, Patrick Bateman, in Bret Easton Ellis's macabre cut on 1980s corporate American life in his novel American Psycho. Thankfully, in real-life, the events depicted in these two works of fiction are rare. Nevertheless, the middle management is the wall that separates the strategic apex from the operating core. Like a white-collar blocking force securing a corporate raid, the middle line is responsible for protecting the strategic apex from superfluous issues that it can solve, filtering information, and ensuring that the

organization's tasks are accomplished in a timely manner and according to a pre-determined set of standards.

**c.** ***The Technostructure***

"The control analysts of the technostructure serve to effect certain forms of standardization in the organization" (Mintzberg, p. 15). Mintzberg's definition of the technostructure conjures up images of people in white lab coats sequestered in the bowels of an office building. Sitting around cheap, folding tables made of particleboard, they discuss such brilliantly esoteric subjects as a mathematical approach to efficiency and a statistical method of analyzing job performance. Besides pale scientists and skinny engineers, the technostructure also comprises those individuals within an organization who determine the best way in which to accomplish tasks. In an organization that builds complex systems such as airplanes and automobiles, the manner in which the technocrats determine how these tasks should be divided and what are the most optimal ways to achieve them is one of the most critical functions of the organization. Depending on the organization, the technostructure may be the determining factor in the organization's success or failure. Although technocrats do not necessarily have to come from the operating core, in many cases, Naval Special Warfare included, they do.

With regard to Naval Special Warfare, the training cell, which is the community's equivalent to a technostructure, is made up predominately of enlisted SEALs and Special Warfare Combatant Crewmen (SWCCs) who have spent many years in either SEAL platoons or Special Boat Unit (SBU) detachments. Naval Special Warfare recognized early in its existence that the most competent personnel that it had for developing standard operating procedure (SOPs) for the operating core were those individuals who had spent a substantial portion of their careers in the operating core.[2]

***d. The Support Staff***

Mintzberg's fourth component of an organization is the support staff. "A glance at the chart of almost any large organization reveals a great number of units, all specialized, that exist to provide support to the organization outside the operating work flow" (Mintzberg, p. 16). The support staff comprises those individuals who are

[2] Although not every organization has a stable of technocrats that have spent time in the operating core, NSW does and, in our opinion, is the better for it.

responsible for various ancillary tasks that ensure that the other four components can focus a maximum amount of their efforts on the organization's mission. With regard to a military organization, the support staff comprises the administrative, medical, and technical divisions, which are responsible for the organization's personnel, health, and maintenance requirements. The support staff is composed of those individuals who process evaluation reports, awards, transfers, medical records, and maintain and repair the organization's technical systems. Although they are not directly responsible for carrying out the organization's mission, their duties are essential to the success of the organization.

#### *e. The Operating Core*

The final component of the organization is also responsible for ensuring that the tasks—which are necessary to the organization's successful accomplishment of its mission—are carried out. "The operating core of the organization encompasses those members—the operators—who perform the basic work related directly to the production of products and services," (Mintzberg, p. 12). The operating core comprises the worker-bees of the organization. These are the individuals whom the strategic apex depends on to complete the organization's mission essential tasks. In terms of Naval Special Warfare, the operating core is composed of the SEAL and SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) platoon operators and the SBU detachment SWCCs that deploy overseas and perform the contingency and wartime tasks that constitute the community's mission. The personnel of the operating core are the foundation of the organization. They are the people who justify the existence of the other four components. Although the operating core often comprises the lowest paid and most junior personnel in the organization, their role—more so than any of the other four components—is to accomplish the organization's primary tasks.

### 2. Mintzberg's Five Organizational Strategies

The various ways in which the strategic apex, middle line, technostructure, support staff, and operating core interact and are coordinated, both vertically and laterally, yield Mintzberg's five organizational strategies: simple structure, machine bureaucracy, divisional bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, and adhocracy. Each of these organizational strategies, except for the divisional bureaucracy, fit into one of

Mintzberg's four categories. Thus, at its most basic level, Mintzberg's argument states that the complexity of a group's tasks—taken in conjunction with the dynamism of the group's environment—determines how the group's five components will vertically and laterally interact and coordinate to accomplish the group's mission. This vertical and lateral coordination, in turn, represents the group's organizational strategy.

The following subsections will discuss each of Mintzberg's five organizational strategies in detail, and discuss the vertical and lateral interaction and coordination that takes place within each of the strategies. Figure 2.2 illustrates how Mintzberg's five components generally interact and coordinate with one another. However, it is important to note that Figure 2.2 is an extremely simplified version of what an actual organization's organizational strategy might look like. Depending on the size and the complexity of the organization, various components may contain their own strategic apexes, middle lines, technostructures, support staffs, and operating cores, to varying degrees, within the organization's overall organizational strategy.

### *a. The Simple Structure*

The simple structure is an organizational strategy that is often adopted by small businesses. Generally, an organization that has adopted a simple structure has only two levels: a strategic apex and an operating core. "Coordination is accomplished primarily through direct supervision, as in a small mom-and-pop operation," (Bolman & Deal, p.63). Mom and Pop, who have only a few employees and a small store, do not need a technostructure or an elaborate support staff. With respect to Mintzberg's four categories, an organization using a simple structure organizational strategy is engaged in simple tasks in a relatively stable environment. Whether it is selling sandwiches to hungry college students or selling widgets to the local carpenter, the unit employing a simple structure relies upon direct supervision from the strategic apex ("Mom" and "Pop") to assure that the tasks are accomplished according to an appropriate standard. However, since a great deal of direct supervision is required to make the simple structure successful, the strategic apex must sacrifice long-term strategic planning for day-to-day operations. Thus, Mintzberg argues, a simple structure is only effective for relatively small-scale operations that fall into a simple/stable category.

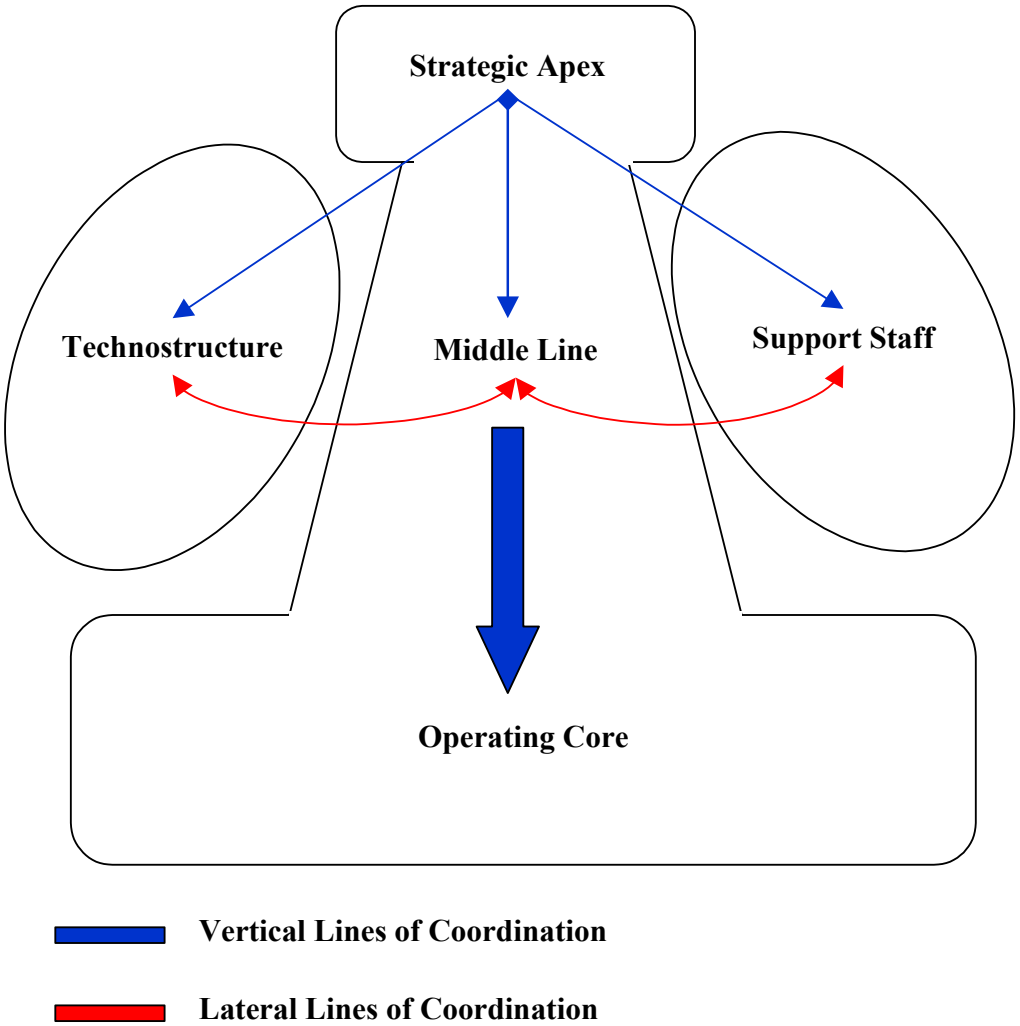


Figure 2.2. Mintzberg's Organizational Logo.

### *b. The Machine Bureaucracy*

The machine bureaucracy is Mintzberg's second organizational strategy. "Unlike simple hierarchies, machine bureaucracies have large support staffs and technostructure, with many layers between [the] apex and operating core," (Bolman & Deal, p. 64). Generally, a group organized as a machine bureaucracy is bigger, and operates best in Mintzberg's simple/dynamic category. Automobile factories and conventional military units are normally used as examples of machine bureaucracies. In these sorts of bureaucracies, the organization depends heavily on the technostructure to standardize tasks and the middle line to ensure that those tasks are accomplished. To get

a clear mental image of the machine bureaucracy, one should think of an assembly line where no one individual in the operating core produces a finished product. Instead, a number of individuals create specific components of a bigger and more complicated system, which will eventually be assembled into the organization's final product. As regards a military organization, no one individual is responsible for winning a battle; instead, the battle is a coordinated effort among individuals. The machine bureaucracy relies on the technostructure insofar as it is the technocrat's job to ensure that every member of the operating core has the know-how to complete his or her task in the most efficient manner possible.

In the machine bureaucracy, there is a firm hierarchy and an established chain of command. However, lateral coordination, between technocrats and middle line managers, and between the middle line and the support staff is also important. Even though the organization relies upon strict vertical lines of communication between the strategic apex and the middle managers, and the middle line and the operating core, the machine bureaucracy's rigid vertical command and control structure is often accused of stifling innovation. But as long as the strategic apex allows for some experimentation at the operating core, the strategic apex can overcome this potential drawback of the machine bureaucracy.

**c.** ***The Divisional Bureaucracy***

Mintzberg's third organizational strategy is the divisional bureaucracy. It is the only organizational strategy that does not fit neatly into one of Mintzberg's four categories. Under the divisional bureaucracy, the operating core has been transformed into separate machine bureaucracies. Therefore, the strategic apex delegates the responsibility for accomplishing the organization's mission down to the operating core. In the divisional bureaucracy, quasi-autonomous units, operating independently of one another, accomplish most of the organization's tasks. This sort of organizational strategy is designed so that each subunit of the organization serves a well-defined marketplace. Vertical coordination and a strict chain of command are less rigid under the divisional bureaucracy than under the machine bureaucracy. Consequently, the operating core is given much more free reign in determining how it will accomplish the organization's mission essential tasks.

An example of a divisional bureaucracy is a big automobile manufacturer such as General Motors. General Motors is divided into several smaller subsidiary divisions (e.g. Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Buick, Pontiac, Cadillac, Geo, etc.) Each of these divisions does not depend on the others to complete its tasks, which in this case is building cars. General Motors can sell off or liquidate one of its divisions, as it recently did with Oldsmobile, with negligible effects on the other subsidiary divisions. If executed properly, the divisional bureaucracy is a very efficient way in which to organize an organization, particularly if that organization is as large and diverse as General Motors.

However, what should be apparent is that the divisional bureaucracy also puts a tremendous strain on the organization's communications networks. Since the subsidiary divisions, be they automobile factories or SEAL Teams, operate largely independently of one another, the potential for needless redundancies, stove-piping[3], and miscommunication is higher than in a more centralized and standardized organizational strategy. Nevertheless, a divisional organizational strategy does allow the organization's subsidiary units a greater opportunity to specialize in a particular area. For General Motors this means allowing Cadillac to focus on building luxury sedans, and GMC to focus on trucks. Similarly, with respect to Naval Special Warfare, divisionalization in the past allowed different SEAL Teams to focus training and operations on different areas of the world.

### *d. The Professional Bureaucracy*

The professional bureaucracy is an organization that has only a few levels in its hierarchy; perhaps only three or four positions separate the personnel in the operating core from the strategic apex. In the professional bureaucracy, the most influential part of the organization is the operating core. The reason that professional bureaucracies tend to be flatter organizations than either the machine or divisional bureaucracies is that the individuals who constitute the operating core are usually highly

[3] Although the term stove-piping might remind the reader of 19th century, soot-covered chimney-sweeps out of a Dickens novel, the term stove-piping actually refers to a unit becoming so wrapped up in completing its own tasks that it ignores how the other units in the organization complete their tasks. Stove-piping could result in serious problems when different units are required to operate with one another, as SEAL and SDV platoons and SBU detachments often are required to do when deployed overseas.

skilled workers. Examples of professional bureaucracies are hospitals, law firms, and universities. In each of these organizations, the tasks that the individuals in the operating core perform are highly complex and, generally, can be only accomplished by one or a handful of individuals.

Whether the task is performing coronary bypass surgery, arguing constitutional law before the Supreme Court, or teaching material science to a class of graduate students, the tasks that professional bureaucrats must perform are highly individualized and, often times, require a great deal of creativity to be successfully accomplished. Since the individuals in the operating core of a professional bureaucracy have to go through a great deal of training to reach their positions, they tend to be much more self-motivated with regard to their work than the unskilled factory worker or fast-food clerk.

Professional bureaucracies do not require a large technostructure to standardize tasks, or many layers of middle managers to supervise the members of the operating core. In a professional bureaucracy, standardization and direct supervision stifle the sense of individualization that these types of organizations require to be successful. "Professional bureaucracies regularly stumble when they try to rationalize the operating core," (Bolman & Deal, p. 66). The professional bureaucracy is also slow to respond to changes in the environment and, thus, fits into Mintzberg's complex/stable category.

***e. The Adhocracy***

If the professional bureaucracy is distinguished by a high degree of individualization and creativity, then the adhocracy demands both, if it is to function at all. Creativity is the life's blood of the adhocracy. Most adhocracies exist in very high-paced environments where variables are constantly shifting. A new idea thought of by the lowest-paid person in the organization five minutes ago can translate into either millions in profit or bankruptcy. Although such caricatures of the adhocracy are somewhat over-exaggerated, they are not wholly inaccurate. The adhocracy functions at its best in Mintzberg's complex/dynamic category—the category that the world is moving increasingly towards, according to Mintzberg.

Examples of adhocracies are dot-com corporations, political campaign staffs, and publishing houses. Each of these organizations exists in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment. Each adhocracy seeks to gain market share by catching the attention of an often fickle public by introducing new products before the opposition does. To adhocracies, timing is everything—whether the goal is to sell baby food on-line, gain five points in the latest poll, or publish the next Harry Potter book. The individuals who have a sixth sense for when and how to move in the most profitable direction are the individuals who will be successful in that adhocracy. Although adhocracies may have a technostructure and support staff, they do not rely on these components to play a significant role in the organization's success. They do, however, rely on loose vertical coordination and a high degree of lateral coordination to exploit such traditional organizational specters as ambiguity, controversy, and indecisiveness, and turn them into advantages. The end-state of the adhocracy is innovation.

### 3. Summary of Mintzberg's Five Organizational Strategies and Four Categories

The trend that should be apparent from this discussion of Mintzberg's five organizational strategies is that each structure is less standardized and centralized than the last. Even though all five of the organizational strategies are composed of the same five components, the manner in which these components interact with one another varies in each. As one analyzes the differences between Mintzberg's five organizational strategies, one should notice a correlation between high degrees of standardization and centralization and rigid vertical and lateral lines of communication. The more standardized and centralized an organization is, for instance, the more likely it will be to adhere to a strict set of SOPs, while strict SOPs translate into more direct supervision. Or we can draw the contrast this way; in a machine bureaucracy completion of tasks largely depends upon strict vertical and lateral lines of communication, whereas in an adhocracy actions depend upon mutual adjustment and, therefore, lines of communications are fluid.

Figure 2.3 illustrates how Mintzberg's five organizational strategies relate to his four categories. The key relationship between his organizational strategies and his four categories is that, as one moves from a simple/stable to a complex/dynamic world, the need for a rigid, centralized, and standardized hierarchy decreases.

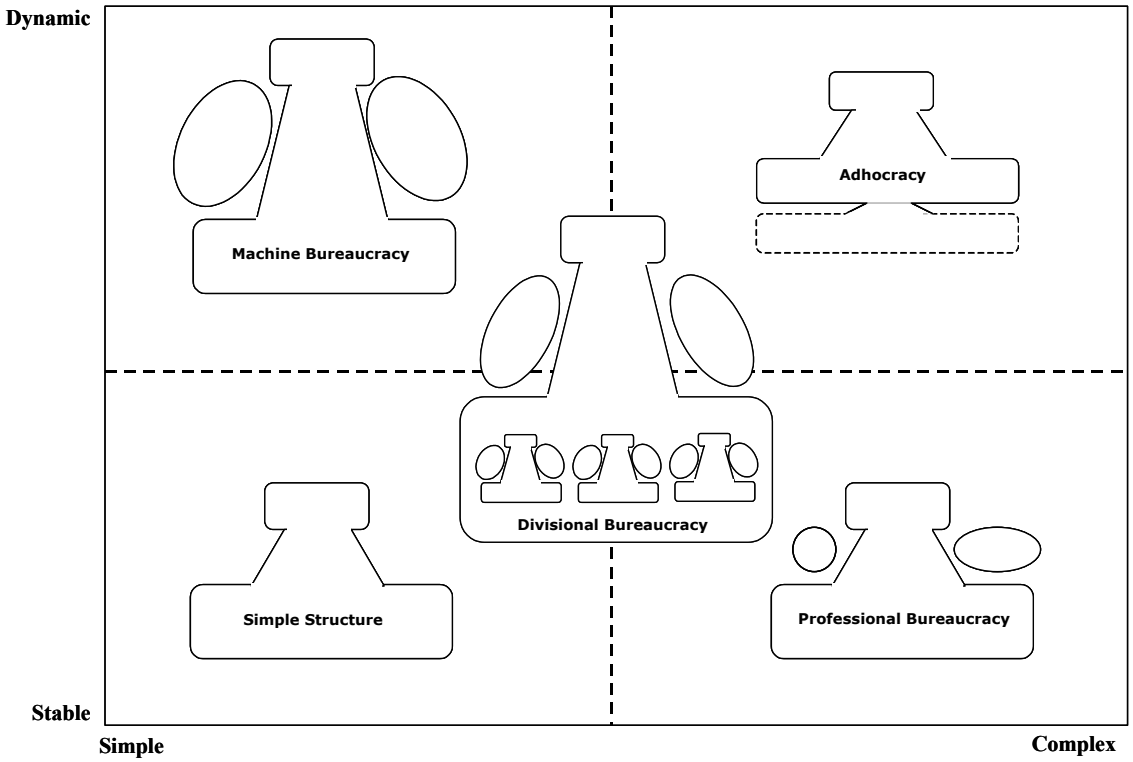


Figure 2.3. Mintzberg's Model.

Although Mintzberg does not advocate any one organizational strategy over the other—since each has it own sets of strengthens and weaknesses—he does argue that tasks are becoming increasingly more complex and the corporate and political environments are becoming increasingly more dynamic. Thus, there is the implicit message in Mintzberg's argument that organizations, as they reorganize, should move away from highly centralized and standardized organizational strategies to ones that are more decentralized and diversified.

This is where we part company from Mintzberg. Mintzberg's model leads one to believe that centralization and decentralization, and standardization and diversification are mutually exclusive. We disagree. Not only is the corporate world now caught in the undertow of the information age tsunami, but also the military world is embroiled in a multi-front war against international terrorism. These two new challenges of the 21st century are not solvable by merely decentralizing and diversifying. But perhaps they are

solvable by centralizing and standardizing at certain levels of the organization, in order to facilitate decentralization and diversification at other levels.

## B. A REINTERPRETATION OF MINTZBERG TO INCLUDE THE NOTION OF DIRECTED MOTION

In Chapter I we mentioned that we believe the distinction between stability and dynamism amounts to a false dichotomy. We should note that although Mintzberg's typology does not make the point abundantly clear, his concepts of stability and dynamism do take into account the infinite grayscale that exists between these two absolute poles. "Stability" is not absolute zero as far as Mintzberg is concerned, but rather is an environment that is not as dynamic as a dynamic environment. Thus, from Mintzberg's perspective, peace and prosperity are dynamic conditions, but they are less so than intense competition and uncertain hostility.

However, what gives us pause is the implication that peace and prosperity are less dynamic than war and competition. If wartime follows peace, and peacetime follows war, then might it not be safe to presume that they are both, in their own ways, dynamic systems, if not also dynamically inter-connected? At the most personal level, it is as if we are being asked to assume that happiness is any less of a dynamic emotion than sadness. Clearly, humans are dynamic creatures and act regardless of the state of their environment.

Unfortunately, Mintzberg ignores the interpersonal dynamics that take place within any organization, let alone the interpersonal dynamics that affect the people within that organization. He likewise fails to address the dynamics between the organization and its competitors, which, incidentally, may not belong to the same marketplace or military organization. These intra-organizational and inter-organizational dynamics essentially represent the many systems and sub-systems that constitute just one aspect of the human condition. Like all systems, be they organic or inorganic, each organizational system has its own set of dynamics that is determined by both its internal and external milieus. Thus, key in the study of organizations is the understanding that ambitious organizations seek to shape and focus their environments, so that they are able to turn constraints into opportunities, which in turn perpetuates their survival.

### 1. A Discussion of Discrete Dynamic Environments as Systems

In today's information age, "system" is used about as much as a truck stop restroom on a Labor Day weekend. Nevertheless, the most basic definition of a system is the interaction of interrelated parts to accomplish a particular goal. Thus, an automobile, an airplane, and an organization are all examples of systems. However, a dynamic environment is also a system of sorts, although it does not function to accomplish any specific goal. In fact such a system is chaotic by its very nature, for the sub-systems (the organizations) that constitute it compete for contradictory goals. At the same time, not all organizations can be described as belonging to or fitting into the same organizationally dynamic environment. Although the concept of an overall dynamic environment—like Mintzberg's—that comprises all organizations is possible, the fact is that such notions are too simple and too grounded in the study of one particular category of organizations to have broad explanatory power.

For example, in the discrete environment of fast-food sales, the goals of McDonald's, Subway, and Taco Bell, though similar, are contradictory to one another, for each restaurant chain wants to dominate a share of the fast-food market for itself. Although McDonald's, Subway, and Taco Bell all belong to the same system— the discrete environment of fast-food sales—their interactions with one another do not lead them toward a common goal. Therefore, the system is chaotic or, in the language of Mintzberg, dynamic. Although discrete dynamic environments can be more or less chaotic, according to Mintzberg's stable-to-dynamic continuum, we believe that all discrete dynamic environments contain a certain degree of dynamism, which is unique to them alone. The manner in which these systems operate as a whole, and the manner in which their constituent parts operate within them, cannot be explained simply by labeling them as either stable or dynamic. Nor is the organizational strategy of one organization within the context of its discrete dynamic environment necessarily applicable to another organization operating under a different set of circumstances. The key point here is that the context within which the organization operates—to include its people and its relative position vis-à-vis its competitors, along with the complexity of its tasks—determines the organizational strategy it adopts.

## 2. Discrete Dynamic Environments and Directed Motion

According to Mintzberg's rubric, more external environmental dynamism should propel an organization to transform itself into an adhocracy. But just because Microsoft is in the complex/dynamic world of software and high technology development and sales, does that mean it has to be an adhocracy to succeed? Similarly, since Naval Special Warfare is in the complex/dynamic world of special operations, does that necessarily mean that it should be moving towards an adhocracy? The answer to both these questions is a resounding no. Organizations do not organize themselves to accomplish a particular mission on the basis of theoretical categories; they organize themselves to accomplish their mission in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Therefore, depending on its discrete dynamic environment, and its relative position in that environment, an organization directs its motion in such a way that it will survive and prosper.

This leads us to the idea of directed motion, which was first developed by the noted 17th century political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. He argued that the natural state of humans, like matter, is motion. Hobbes drew his hypothesis, regarding the relationship between people and motion, from Galileo Galili's simple postulate that "things moved unless something else stopped them" (Macpherson, p.19). Hobbes's application of Galileo's postulate of motion to the social interaction of humans resulted in western philosophy's first scientific approach to social science. Hobbes's argument that nation-states act by directing their resources toward their own self-interests (i.e. promotion of the state) is the same argument that we are now using to explain why groups organize in a particular way: the purpose of an organizational strategy is to direct the resources of the organization towards that organization's self-interest. In the case of a military organization, that self-interest is successful mission completion and continued relevance.

The concept of directed motion, when used to explain how groups function within a discrete dynamic environment, does not preclude any of Mintzberg's organizational strategies. Indeed, any one of Mintzberg's five organizational strategies might be useful to an organization depending on its own chaotic environment and the direction in which it

needs to move in order to function effectively and efficiently within it. More to the point still, a large organization, like Naval Special Warfare, may well employ more than one of these strategies simultaneously and at different levels.

Although most organizations can be explained in terms of Mintzberg's five organizational strategies, no organization strictly adheres to every tenet of one strategy. As organizations evolve, their missions may either broaden or narrow and their environments might change: as an organization evolves, so too will its organizational strategy. This does not necessarily mean that a machine bureaucracy will change into a professional bureaucracy or an adhocracy into a divisional bureaucracy, though this sort of transformation may occur; however, it does mean that organizations are themselves discrete dynamic systems that are constantly changing and, thus, embroiled in a continuous battle with efficiency's greatest enemy—inertia. Inertia, which is simply motion within the organization that has become undirected and chaotic, is the hobgoblin that all leaders at the strategic apex fear and seek to avoid. Thus, Mintzberg's five organizational strategies are merely concepts that, in reality, are as fluid as the organizations that they are meant to describe and the environments in which those organizations exist.

## C. SUMMARY

We began this chapter with a simple premise: task-organizing towards a mission was doubtless a concept that Mintzberg realized early on when he formulated his theory. But we ended this chapter with the notion of discrete dynamic environments, a notion which is far more ambiguous. Although the concept of task-organization is self-evident when viewed from the perspective that all things are not equal—that all things are, in fact, unique—the notion of task-organization as an explanation for all organizational strategies no longer seems like a concept that is so obvious. Instead, it seems to be as horribly arbitrary and ambiguous as the discrete dynamic environments in which organizations operate. For if we are unable to understand the randomness of tasks that exist right here and now, how can we ever hope to plan for an even more uncertain future? Tasks that were once relevant a few minutes ago and are wholly irrelevant in a moment's notice—as in the case of adhocracies—are not the sort of tasks that occupy *every* organization. What we have instead is a world in which organizations constantly

struggle to stay ahead of what was once relevant and important, but the timeframe can be a matter of either hours or years. As organizations scramble for the brass ring that will put them ahead of the other guy, organizations are left with nothing more than a sense of anxious wonder about what might be next. Although task-organization may seem like a simple concept—which logically lends itself to the two-by-two matrix Mintzberg constructed to explain bureaucratic organization— an understanding of what that notion *really* means is, in fact, far more difficult.

As we explore the unique environment of Naval Special Warfare in the ensuing chapters, the reader should remember that all organizations, like people, can be described and analyzed any number of ways. In humanity's attempt to understand the chaotic reality in which we all live, we as humans have formulated theories and postulated arguments that try to make sense of our world. But the answers we find are often as unsatisfying as the models that they are derived from. Understanding "the way it is" is no easy task. It is a task that requires the analyst to remove himself from the way he thinks it should be in order to comprehend the way it was, why it was like that, and how it might one day yet be. This task becomes even more daunting when the environment that one hopes to study involves one's self. Yet, when we abandon popular rhetoric for reason, and non-falsifiable theories for critical thought, we begin to see the deeper shades of truth that color our reality. Having said this, it is to the world of Naval Special Warfare that we now turn.

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# III. NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE: HOW IT WAS AND WHY IT IS CHANGING

## A. A BRIEF HISTORY OF NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE

The Naval Special Warfare community traces its roots back to the Scouts and Raiders, and Navy Combat Demolition Units of World War Two. The seeds of America's current maritime special operations forces were sown off the coast of Tarawa, one of the remote Gilbert Islands in the South Pacific, on a fateful day in November of 1943. As the American amphibious raiding crafts, carrying thousands of Marines, approached Tarawa's beaches, they struck the large coral reefs that protected the small island from the invading forces. The raiding craft lay helpless and snarled in the clutches of these vast reefs, while the beachhead erupted with Japanese small arms and artillery fire. The crafts' masters had no choice but to launch their Marines hundreds of yards from the beach. As the Marines struggled toward the beachhead under intense fire from the ensconced Japanese, they tripped and stumbled over the sharp, jagged coral that separated them from their objectives. The enemy's bullets cut down some Marines, while others fell into the deep, watery chasms that separated the coral heads from one another. Anchored to the South Pacific's sandy ocean bottom by the very equipment they depended upon to save their lives, many of the Marines drowned before ever firing a shot.

The precursor of the modern day Naval Special Warfare community was born in that fiery crucible off the coast of Tarawa. Following the Battle of Tarawa, the Navy created the first frogmen for the specific purpose of demolishing shallow water obstacles, clearing beach lanes, and preparing beachheads for oncoming amphibious raiders. The Navy was determined to ensure that the tragedy of Tarawa would never be repeated, and to this day, it has not been. In every conflict since WWII, Naval Special Warfare has distinguished itself. From Korea to Vietnam, and from the Persian Gulf to the dusty streets of Somalia, Naval Special Warfare operators have fought with honor, courage, and commitment, and continue to remain one of the world's premier special operations forces.

## B. THE MISSION AND TASKS OF NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE

The overall mission of the Naval Special Warfare community is to provide the commanders-in-chief (CINCs) of the United States's four regional areas of interest with highly trained and equipped SEAL and SDV platoons and SBU detachments. The mission of these units is to successfully conduct maritime special operations in all wartime and contingency operations. The manner in which Naval Special Warfare has organized itself to accomplish its overall mission has evolved along with American interests; NSW-21 is merely the next step in this continuing evolution. Although the organizational strategy preceding the NSW-21 transformation allowed Naval Special Warfare to accomplish its mission, its focus on quasi-autonomous SEAL and SDV Teams and SBUs was far from perfect. In the following pages, we shall discuss how Naval Special Warfare was organized, where this organizational strategy came from, and why it is now being changed.

### 1. How Naval Special Warfare Accomplished its Mission in the Past

Prior to NSW-21, each coast—east and west—was assigned three SEAL Teams, one SDV Team, and one or two SBUs.[1] Each SEAL Team was regionally oriented according to the regional orientation of the war-fighting CINCs. For example, SEAL Team FIVE was regionally oriented towards Korea, and deployed to the Pacific Command, whereas SEAL Team TWO was regionally oriented towards Europe. Under the old divisional bureaucratic strategy, the SEAL Team was the primary unit responsible and accountable for training, equipping, and deploying combat-ready SEAL platoons to the regional CINCs. Typically, each SEAL Team deployed two platoons at one time, while each SDV Team deployed one platoon or task unit, and each SBU deployed three or four Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boat (RHIB) detachments and one Mark V Special Operations Craft (MKV SOC) detachment. Under Naval Special Warfare's old organizational strategy (OOS), the SEAL Teams, SDV Teams, and SBUs were non-deployable commands, which primarily focused on preparing their platoons and detachments for deployment. The Teams and SBUs worked independently of one

[1] Special Boat Squadron TWO in Little Creek Virginia has two SBUs attached to it; however, SBU-22 in Stennis, Mississippi is primarily a reserve command, and focuses on riverine training.

another, even though the different platoons and detachments from each of these units often deployed to the same places. The focus of the OOS was on emphasizing the Teams' and SBUs' roles as the primary producers of deployable assets, and not as war-fighting commands.

### 2. Naval Special Warfare's Operational Missions and Mission Essential Tasks

Under the OOS, deployed Naval Special Warfare assets had to be able to complete a set of mission essential tasks in order to accomplish the community's overall mission.[2] The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the regional CINCs were, and still are, the two organizations that approved Naval Special Warfare's mission essential tasks. "Ultimately, the purpose of America's military is to fight and win the nation's wars. SOF plays a critical role in supporting the geographical CINCs in their peacetime strategies and theater war plans," (SOF Vision 2020, p. 9). As the maritime component of the USSOCOM, Naval Special Warfare's role is not much different than the one cited above. Essentially, all SOF assets focus on eight types of operational missions: direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, counter-terrorism, counter-drug, counter-proliferation, foreign internal defense, and peacekeeping. Although different component commands under the Special Operations Command focus on different aspects of these missions, essentially all deployable SOF assets have the capability to engage in any one of these missions in one fashion or another.

Thus, Naval Special Warfare's overall mission to provide CINCs with highly trained and equipped maritime special operations assets requires that they be able to accomplish the eight operational SOF missions listed above. Although a description of the specific tactics and techniques Naval Special Warfare employs to accomplish these eight operational missions is not warranted, a discussion concerning the mission essential tasks that deployable NSW assets are required to complete is necessary.

Naval Special Warfare's mission essential tasks[3] are a set of individual and platoon or detachment skills that a SEAL or SDV platoon or SBU detachment must

[2] This is still the case under NSW-21 as well.

[3] The term "mission essential tasks" comes from the Army's Mission Essential Tasks List (METL)

competently complete before being certified a deployable unit. These skills include, but are not limited to, the following: small-arms marksmanship; weapons training (e.g. AT-4 rockets, 40mm grenade launchers, and .50 caliber machine gun); land navigation; medical training; small boat navigation; combat swimmer techniques; airborne operations; visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) techniques; combat search and rescue (CSAR) techniques; raids; ambushes; communications training; and special reconnaissance and digital imagery transmission. Some of these skills are fairly straightforward and individualized, such as marksmanship and land navigation, whereas others, such as VBSS, special reconnaissance, and combat swimmer operations involving the SDV, are highly complex skills that require the interaction of many individuals and moving parts. For example, a counter-drug mission that calls for tasks ranging from VBSS operations to special reconnaissance could involve the interaction and interoperability of SEAL and SDV platoons, SBU detachments, and other special operations aerial assets.

The majority of Naval Special Warfare's operational missions are high risk and high reward. These missions are often complex in nature, and require highly trained and skilled individuals to accomplish them. These individuals are the operators who must coordinate and execute their tasks effectively in order to achieve a successful outcome. Therefore, even according to Mintzberg's four categories, one should not find it surprising that Naval Special Warfare operates according to a relatively sophisticated organizational strategy. However, task complexity is only one explanation for Naval Special Warfare's old divisional bureaucratic strategy. The community's discrete dynamic environment provides another explanation. In fact, Naval Special Warfare's adoption of its old divisional bureaucratic strategy had much more to do with the community's discrete dynamic environment than it did with its task complexity— as we will now see.

## C. THE WORLD OF NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE

In Chapter II we introduced the concept of discrete dynamic environments but defined it somewhat abstractly. Basically, we asserted that an organization operates

system, which is exactly what the name implies: a list of mission essential tasks a unit must be able to complete when deployed. The Navy, Naval Special Warfare included, does not use the METL system; instead, the Navy equivalent to METL is the FXP-6 system. Although the acronyms are different, the concept is essentially the same.

within the context of a discrete environment, as do its competitors. The objective of all the organizations in that discrete environment is to compete with one another by efficiently and effectively directing the motion of their organizations toward a similar mission. We see this clearly in the realm of Naval Special Warfare.

### 1. The Navy Factor: When in Doubt, Do What You Know

Perhaps, the best way to begin an explanation about Naval Special Warfare's discrete dynamic environment is with a discussion of how the community relates, and adheres, to naval tradition, and how this tradition has helped shape the organization. If we think about the early days of the community, when the term SEAL was over a decade away from being coined and still referred to a playful aquatic mammal, the Naval Special Warfare community was really nothing more than a small support element belonging to a much larger conventional surface navy. Although the jobs of the early frogmen were quite different from those of their conventional navy counterparts, the nascent Naval Special Warfare community nevertheless adopted, and continues to practice, many of the traditions and customs that have distinguished the Navy for over two hundred years from the other branches of the armed services. These traditions and customs include changes of command, hail and farewells, and chiefs' initiations, as well as naval courtesies such as referring to all commanding officers, with the rank of captain and below, as captain. More significant still, Naval Special Warfare also borrowed from the conventional navy's manner of organization.

The conventional surface navy wages warfare with ships; there is no department or division aboard a ship that can fight a war alone.[4] The combat information center is useless without a bridge crew, and the bridge crew cannot operate without an engineering section. Although this may seem operationally self-evident, organizationally it has many implications for the conventional surface navy. Since the ship is the primary war-fighting unit, we would expect the conventional navy to structure its organization around the ship and give the ship as much control over itself as practical. This, in fact, is exactly what

[4] The conventional Navy also wages war, to a certain degree, with boats. Amphibious warfare would be one example of such a use of boats by the surface Navy. However, the small boat operations of the conventional navy are different than the small boat operations of Naval Special Warfare—by doctrine small boats in the surface Navy do not operate independently, whereas, if the need arises, Naval Special Warfare small boats are able to operate independently of a larger amphibious force.

has occurred. If we examine the attributes of a divisional bureaucracy—specifically, the notion that in a divisional bureaucracy, quasi-autonomous units operate independently of one another to accomplish the organization's tasks—then we begin to understand why the conventional surface navy is organized into a divisional bureaucracy.

In terms of Mintzberg's organizational strategies, we could describe an average ship's organization of 300 to 400 individuals as essentially a machine bureaucracy. Although U.S. warships rarely operate totally independently of one another, the nature of conventional maritime warfare requires that ships have such a capability. For instance, if a ship is shot at, catches fire, or is caught in a storm, then it is incumbent upon the crew of that vessel to keep her afloat. The ship is the crew's weapon, protection, and home; therefore, regardless of the ship's coordinating instructions, its operating environment requires it to be able to function as independently as possible. It makes a great deal of sense then for the surface navy to focus on the ship as its core-operating unit, and to allow the ship to have as much autonomy as possible. The realities of life at sea are such that the ship must become a self-contained unit. This is quite different from the realities that define a SEAL Team.

The Naval Special Warfare equivalent to the warship is the SEAL or SDV Team or SBU. All three of these commands have roughly the same number of individuals assigned to them, as does a small ship—such as a frigate which has a crew of about 300 sailors. And like the frigate, they are also all commanded by O-5 commanders. However, unlike the warship, the main fighting unit of either the SEAL or SDV Team or the SBU is not the command, but rather the platoon or special boat detachment. This marks a fundamental difference between the conventional surface navy and Naval Special Warfare: the warship cannot split apart to fight, whereas the SEAL Team must. Thus, an organizational strategy that is similar to the divisional bureaucratic strategy of the conventional navy may not be the most effective and efficient way for Naval Special Warfare to do business.

Before we continue, it is critical to point out that we are not arguing that the Naval Special Warfare community of yesteryear simply imported the conventional surface navy's command structure wholesale into its organizational design. If this were

the case, then Naval Special Warfare would have pursued a transformation effort long before NSW-21. What we are arguing, though, is that naval traditions had much more influence on the Naval Special Warfare community than its ceremonies, uniforms, and jargon might alone suggest. Indeed, Naval *organizational* traditions had just as much effect on Naval Special Warfare as did cultural traditions. The SEAL and SDV Teams and SBUs' missions under the old divisional bureaucratic strategy exemplify this point. Like the warship, their missions were to train, equip, and deploy; however, in the case of warships, these goals applied to the vessel itself, whereas in the case of Teams and SBUs they only applied to a select sub-group of operators.

### 2. The Human Factor

Although naval tradition may help account for Naval Special Warfare's OOS, it alone is not sufficient to explain how and why NSW developed as it did. Another explanation, which does not preclude the tradition argument, has to do with the ethos of the individuals within Naval Special Warfare. This has also had a hand in shaping the organization.

The moniker 'Navy SEAL' may invoke images of surly men who are filled with bravado, have long hair, and wear cool sunglasses. However, behind the Hollywood and pulp-fiction versions of Navy SEALs, there are a few thousand operators who actually do the job for a living. There is no personality or body type that best characterizes either a SEAL or his SBU counterpart, the Special Warfare Combatant Crewman (SWCC). If one were to claim that one could stereotype a SEAL or SWCC a certain way, then doubtless that description would be as equally one-dimensional and misguided, but merely in a different way. As with all organizations, groups, and clans, Naval Special Warfare is composed of a set of unique individuals who are united by a common purpose. To paraphrase the famous 19th century English author Thomas Hardy, the greatest characters we write are but a bag of bones compared to the lives we live. And the lives that NSW operators live are far from fictional.

Having said that though, there are certain qualities that SEALs and SWCCs do share. Most special operators in the community, or at least the ones that we know, admire, and respect, are independent-minded team players who sincerely desire to

perform well; they are individuals who are at their best when they are given a task and allowed to run with it. They are also individuals who require minimal supervision and, in fact, function better without it. Perhaps these qualities are innate to the individuals who are drawn to Naval Special Warfare, or perhaps they are fostered and nurtured in the special operations community. Regardless of their origins, they essentially explain how a small platoon or squad of men is able to operate quasi-autonomously behind enemy lines with a high degree of success.

Like a ship, the SEAL platoon or SBU detachment also requires some autonomy while operating on either an enemy's coast or in an enemy's littoral waters. The discrete dynamic environment of both—the ship's being the vast expanse of the ocean, and the NSW operator's being a hostile coastline—call for organizational strategies that allow decisions to be made at the level of the war-fighter. However, unlike the ship, which itself is the primary means of waging war; platoons and detachments fill that same function for the SEAL and SDV Teams and the SBUs. Thus, one question that arises is, "What does Naval Special Warfare's ethos have to do with its having borrowed from the conventional Navy's organizational style?" One answer doubtless involves the shared traditions we discussed earlier; however, another answer is that the divisional bureaucratic strategy of the conventional Navy offers the ship captain a great deal of autonomy: an amount of autonomy that would have made a lot of sense not only to perspective NSW commanding officers, but also the community's rank-in-file operator…that is, as long as some of that autonomy was also pushed down to their level. Since Naval Special Warfare is a community that values autonomy at even the lowest echelons of its organization, an organizational strategy that tended towards a divisional bureaucracy, with its looser overall command and control structure, doubtless would have been much more appealing to NSW than a machine bureaucracy, with its rigid hierarchy and centralized and standardized command and control structure.

In simple terms, the ethos argument fits with the Naval tradition argument. Since part of Naval Special Warfare's ethos is to push decision-making down to the lowest levels possible, thereby providing the independent minded individuals who are the community's leaders and operators the opportunity to solve problems at their level, and since the community is historically tied to the surface navy; one might expect that 1)

Naval Special Warfare would adopt an organizational strategy that allowed as much autonomy in its operating core as practical, and 2) it would tend to gravitate toward the quasi-autonomous surface navy model rather than some other organizational paradigm with which NSW shared no common history.

### 3. The Competition Factor

Before we conclude this section on Naval Special Warfare's discrete dynamic environment, we would be remiss if we did not address one more aspect of the discrete environment that Naval Special Warfare inhabits. In a world that can be analyzed through a Darwinian lens just as easily as any other, it must be said that no discrete dynamic environment is devoid of competition. Thus, like many organizations, Naval Special Warfare also has its competitors.

A SEAL platoon's two primary competitors for missions are Marine Corps Force Recon platoons and Army Special Forces A-Teams. Each of these organizations, though they doctrinally fill a separate niche from maritime special operations, claims similar capabilities as Naval Special Warfare. As well, one should note that Naval Special Warfare also claims to have similar capabilities that infringe on the niches of Marine Corps and Army special operations. Regardless of who is better at what, and what each organization is best suited to do in an efficiently-designed military, the fact remains that each of these three organizations—Marine Corps Force Recon, Army Special Forces, and Naval Special Warfare—often times competes for a limited share of the operational pie. Therefore, the following discussion is not about what should be, or even what could be, but rather what exists.

Competition is perhaps the most influential catalyst for compelling an organization to overcome its internal inertia and efficiently and effectively redirect its motion towards a common mission. Competition is the concept that compels the runner to run faster, the racecar driver to drive harder, and the organization to do better. Otherwise, when an organization becomes complacent, it runs the risk of irrelevancy, thus becoming a worthless relic. Competition has played such a role in Naval Special Warfare's discrete dynamic environment of maritime special operations. However, we should note that a feeling of impending doom is not what led Naval Special Warfare to

pursue the NSW-21 transformation. In fact, NSW-21 was conceived to avert a possible future organizational crisis before such a crisis had a chance to erupt.

All three of the organizations mentioned above, in some fashion or another, attempt to discern the nature of future conflicts, assess their relevance to maritime SOF, and adjust their mission essential tasks accordingly. Since the future is even more fluid than the present, an accurate model of tomorrow's conflicts is not only difficult to develop, but also practically impossible to conceive. Nevertheless, based on its past and the relative success of its competitors, these military organizations are afforded a paradigm by which to begin to understand future conflicts. Understanding and constantly refining this paradigm is a key to gaining the competitive edge, and the key to any successful organizational transformation.

## D. THE WAY IT WAS

Naval Special Warfare's old divisional bureaucratic strategy, which we have argued was, in part, derived from the conventional surface navy's organizational strategy, has not been wholly ineffective and inefficient for the NSW community. In fact, the community's OOS had allowed Naval Special Warfare to accomplish its missions rather successfully in the past. This fact may lead us to wonder why Naval Special Warfare sought to transform itself in the first place. This question is at the heart of the following discussion. Although the OOS was not broken, it was also not perfect. The following analysis will address these imperfections as well as what Naval Special Warfare looked like under the divisional bureaucratic strategy.

### 1. Naval Special Warfare in terms of Mintzberg's Five Organizational Components

The Naval Special Warfare Command (WARCOM) is the highest echelon unit in Naval Special Warfare (NSW). It is commanded by a one star rear admiral, and is at the pinnacle of the community's command structure.[5] Under WARCOM there are six major commands: NSW Group ONE, NSW Group TWO, Special Boat Squadron ONE (CSBR-1), Special Boat Squadron TWO (CSBR-2), the Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU), and the Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWC). Each of these units is commanded by an O-6 captain, (referred to as a commodore), and under him are the

[5] WARCOM has recently been coded as a two star billet.

various operational, training, and support commands that constitute the Naval Special Warfare community. Figure 3.1 represents the command relationship of WARCOM, the six major commands, and all their subordinate units under the OOS. Although the organizational flow chart in Figure 3.1 looks only slightly different under NSW-21, the manner in which these commands interact with one another has changed significantly.

In terms of Mintzberg's five components, WARCOM represents Naval Special Warfare's strategic apex. Groups ONE and TWO have departments and divisions within their commands that function as support staffers, middle line managers, and technocrats. Although Groups ONE and TWO are still classified as part of the middle line, technostructure, and support staff, under NSW-21 their, technostructure and support staff responsibilities have increased significantly. CSBR-1 and CSBR-2 are essentially the special boat equivalents of Groups ONE and TWO; however, they are not part of the community's technostructure. DEVGRU, whose stated mission is to develop tactics and test weapons systems for Naval Special Warfare, is part of the middle line and technostructure. Finally, NSW's operating core comprises the SEAL and SDV Teams and SBUs on each coast as well as the overseas NSW Units.

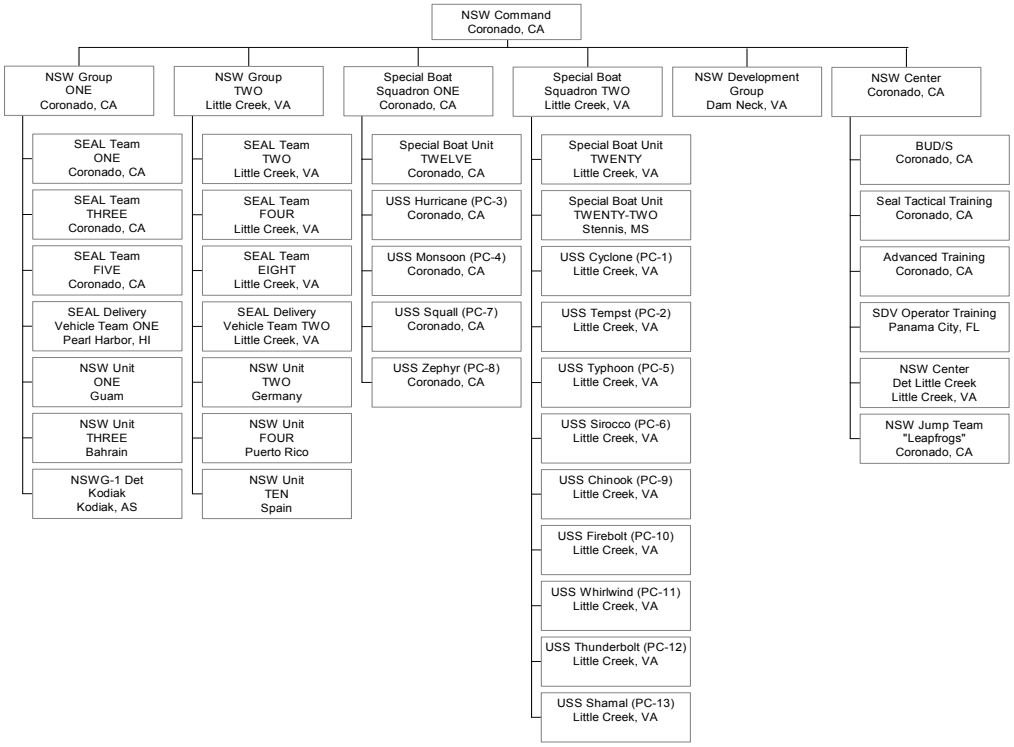


Figure 3.1. Naval Special Warfare's Old Organizational Flow Chart.

Figure 3.2 illustrates how one might interpret Naval Special Warfare in terms of Mintzberg's divisional bureaucracy. The blue circles in Figure 3.2 are meant to represent different functions within the same command. For example, Group ONE is one command; however, certain departments and divisions within it are part of either the technostructure, middle line, or support staff. Although this explanation is perhaps a bit confusing, the following section on the roles and responsibilities of each of Naval Special Warfare's component commands should clarify this point.

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Under Naval Special Warfare's OOS, the role of WARCOM was, and still remains, to provide and develop the community's long-term vision as well as a strategy to reach that vision. Group ONE and TWO's roles were primarily to support the SEAL and SDV Teams monetarily, as well as provide limited training and logistical support. The Groups' training responsibilities mainly consisted of running SEAL Tactical Training (STT)—a fourteen-week course that was designed to prepare BUD/S graduates for an operational Team—as well as hosting some individual skills schools such as sniper, communication, and cold weather training. In terms of logistical support, the Groups focused on ensuring that deployed platoons were funded properly and that they had aircraft to take them and their equipment into theater. Although both these roles are essential to Naval Special Warfare, they also represent the limited operational involvement that the Groups had with the day-to-day activities of their SEAL and SDV Teams. The primary jobs of Groups ONE and TWO under the OOS were to administer Operational Readiness Exercises (OREs) to each of the Teams' platoons that were preparing to deploy, to ensure that the Teams were running efficiently and effectively, and to prepare contingency war plans. The Groups had virtually no role in how each Team conducted its pre-deployment training phase for its constituent platoons.

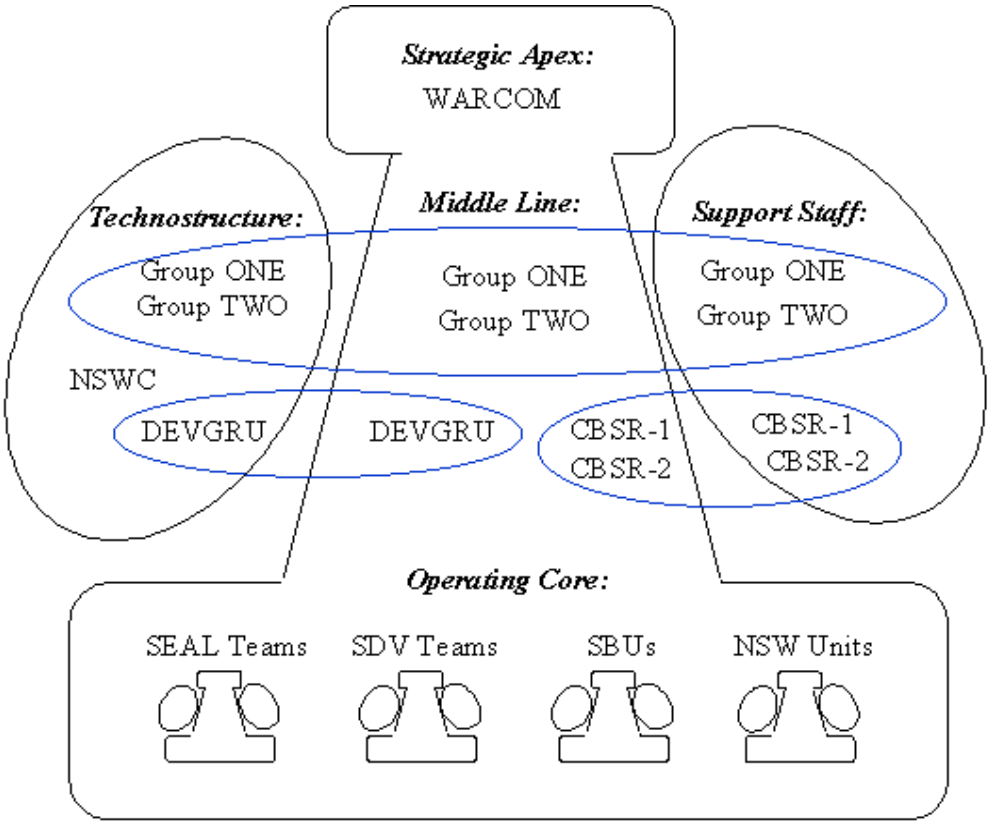


Figure 3.2. NSW's Organizational Strategy in Terms of Mintzberg.

### *a. The Teams*

Under the old divisional bureaucratic strategy, the SEAL and SDV Teams were granted considerable latitude in terms of how they trained and equipped their platoons. Although the Teams did not have absolute free reign in shaping their platoons, they did have a lot of autonomy. For example, SEAL Teams ONE, THREE, and FIVE are all next door to one another on the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, California. However, if one had gone to each of the Teams' training cells, one would have found different training schedules, and different tactics being taught. Though all three Teams received the same general guidance from Group ONE, the manner in which they interpreted that guidance and subsequently formulated training plans was largely left to the discretion of the commanding officers. Similarly, the Teams' commanding officers had the final say on what equipment their Teams would issue to their platoons. This discretion was somewhat limited with regard to weapons, dive rigs, and communications gear, since these pieces of equipment are expensive, require approval from either the

Navy, USSOCOM, or both before issuance, and are often limited in quantity. Nevertheless, personal gear such as backpacks, load bearing equipment, holsters, thermal protection, dive masks, knives, escape and recovery kits, maintenance equipment, and a bevy of other pieces of mission essential gear were selected, purchased, and issued separately by each Team.

Although these broad training and equipping responsibilities in Naval Special Warfare's operating core gave each Team a great deal of flexibility and autonomy, they also absorbed a lot of the commanding officer's time and attention. As we alluded to earlier, the SEAL and SDV Teams did not deploy prior to NSW-21.[6] There were at least two reasons for this.

The first and most crucial factor that made the deployment of an entire SEAL Team difficult under the divisional bureaucracy was the training and equipping responsibilities of the Teams. Since each Team was required to train the two platoons that would eventually replace the overseas platoons, the Team headquarters (e.g. the commanding officer, executive officer, operations department, and training cell) spent a significant amount of its time and effort ensuring that its new platoons were properly trained, and subsequently able to pass the Group's ORE. Thus, the Team's focus was on training and not war-fighting. This organizational strategy posed an interesting paradox for the community; namely, the commanding officer—the SEAL Team CO—who had spent the most time with the deploying platoons, and probably knew their strengths and limitations better than anyone, was not the leader who was going to lead them into war.

Second, and probably least significant, is that under the OOS each SEAL Team was regionally oriented, and was only required to deploy two platoons at any one given time during routine peacetime deployment cycles.[7] Under the OOS, when the CINC requested SEAL platoons, twelve platoons deployed from six Teams to the four CINCs as follows: two platoons from Teams ONE and FIVE went to the Pacific

[6] Although the SEAL Teams will deploy under NSW-21, the SDV Teams and SBU will not, and will retain many of their pre-NSW-21 responsibilities.

[7] One should note that the SDV Teams and SBUs have never been regionally oriented, because there are only one or two of them on each coast, and they primarily focus on unconventional undersea warfare (the SDVs) and small boat operations (the SBUs). Consequently, the regional CINCs' need for multiple SDV platoons and SBU detachments are limited.

Command (PACOM,) two platoons from Team THREE went to the Central Command (CENTCOM), two platoons from Teams TWO and EIGHT deployed to the European Command (EUCOM), and two platoons from Team FOUR deployed to the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). Although the expertise that Naval Special Warfare gained by having regionally oriented SEAL Teams will not immediately disappear under NSW-21, the capability will become somewhat diluted. This is because the deployable squadron concept, which calls for the deployment of an entire SEAL Team, will force the Teams to focus on two regions of the world rather than one.

With respect to the equipping responsibility of the SEAL Teams under the OOS, which also included maintenance, much of the routine and non-operational maintenance that once took place at the Team level will now be shifted to the Group level. Since the Teams were responsible for maintaining and providing their platoons with equipment, the Teams consequently required a rather robust support staff to fulfill this function. Nearly a third of the Teams' personnel were support staffers who were responsible for maintaining, inventorying, and issuing equipment to the operational platoons.[8] Thus, it should come as no surprise that a substantial portion of the headquarters' time was spent coordinating, planning, and enforcing both training and equipping policies for the Teams' platoons. This focus on non-operational responsibilities posed serious challenges to Naval Special Warfare. However, before we discuss the way in which these challenges have been addressed by NSW-21, we must first turn our attention to completing the discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the various portions of the Naval Special Warfare community by focusing on three other major subsections of NSW: the Special Boat Units, the NSW units, and the NSWC.

***b. The Boats***

Like the SEAL and SDV Teams, the SBUs were also vested with training and equipping responsibilities under the OOS. Although NSW-21 will affect the boat units and their parent squadrons, their responsibilities will not change that much under NSW-21. Specifically, the SBUs will not become deployable units under NSW-21, and they will retain their training and equipping, as well as maintenance and logistical,

[8] At the SDV Teams, support staffers comprised nearly two thirds of the commands personnel. Likewise, the SBUs also have more support staffers than the SEAL Teams.

responsibilities. Under the OOS, the SBUs, like the SEAL Teams, focused on preparing the special boat detachments for deployment. Therefore, the bulk of the SBUs' time was spent ensuring that personnel were properly trained and the boats were maintained and ready to deploy.

The squadrons, under which the SBUs and Patrol Coastal (PCs) ships fall, are fiscally responsible for their assets and for administering OREs to the deploying boat detachments. CSBR-1 and CSBR-2 were created because of the growing role of special boats in the Naval Special Warfare community, the commissioning of the PCs, and the need for a special boat type-command within the community.[9] Before the creation of the boat squadrons, the SBUs belonged to the Groups. However, since the Groups' primary focus was on SEAL issues, the special boat operators were often relegated to administrative support roles. Hence, this organizational arrangement did not optimize either the SBUs or their personnel, and as a result degraded their operational capabilities.

As for the PCs, which are the only surface navy ships that do not belong to the conventional surface navy, they constitute the majority of the boat squadrons' subordinate commands. Yet, the SBUs are the squadrons' most important asset. There has been speculation about whether Naval Special Warfare will retain the PCs in the future. If the community decides to divest itself of the PCs, as seems likely, then the need for having two boat squadron major commands may be called into question, since without the PCs the squadrons' only subordinate units will be the SBUs. In the case of CSBR-1, for instance, the disappearance of the PCs would mean that CSBR-1's only subordinate asset would be SBU-12. Meanwhile, there has also been serious talk of converting CSBR-1 into an undersea mobility major command, consisting of SDV Teams ONE and TWO and the community's Advanced SEAL Delivery Systems (ASDS)[10], and re-commissioning CSBR-2 as a surface mobility major command, consisting of SBUs TWELVE, TWO ZERO, and TWO TWO. Such a move makes a great deal of sense for

[9] A type-command is a navy command that focuses its attention towards a particular area of expertise. The Groups and the boat squadrons represent different type-commands within the community: one focusing on SEAL platoons and the other on boats.

[10] The ASDS is a 65-foot dry submersible that was designed to carry SEALs for a considerable distance and deliver them to their target destination. NSW currently has one ASDS, located at SDVT-1 in Pearl Harbor, HI, in its inventory. However, budgeting for additional ASDSs has been cut for fiscal year 2002. The future of the program is yet to be determined.

Naval Special Warfare because the community would retain its surface mobility type-command, and also would gain an undersea mobility type-command that addresses the specific and growing needs of asymmetrical subsurface warfare. Though as of this writing, the decision whether to proceed with this plan is pending, and it will likely be a number of years before its implementation.

The overall effects of NSW-21 on the SBUs, and their parent boat squadrons are not yet fully known. However, NSW-21 will address some of the challenges concerning interoperability issues between the SEAL platoons and the SBU detachments under Naval Special Warfare's OOS. Although we will discuss these particular challenges in more detail below, one should note that the SBUs were not the primary focus of NSW-21. At the same time, the NSW-21 transformation does take into account some of the challenges with regard to the SBUs and has sought to rectify them.

***c. The NSW Units***

Besides the Teams and SBUs, the Naval Special Warfare community also has five other O-5 commands. These commands all fall under either Group ONE or Group TWO, and are located overseas in various regional theaters. Each of these O-5 commands are Naval Special Warfare Units that are administratively attached to the Groups, and either fall under the operational control of the regional special operations component commander (SOC), or under the tactical command of the naval component commander (the numbered fleet commander) of the region during a contingency operation. Each of these units and its regional orientation is as follows: Unit ONE in Guam, PACOM; Unit TWO in Germany and Unit TEN in Spain, EUCOM; Unit THREE in Bahrain, CENTCOM; and Unit FOUR in Puerto Rico, SOUTHCOM. These units are Naval Special Warfare's forward assets, and are responsible for acting as liaisons between the NSW community and the other in-theater assets (e.g. Navy, Army, and Air Force). The units are also responsible for continuity and for organizing operations and exercises for deployed NSW assets.

Under the OOS, SEAL and SDV platoons and boat detachments would either deploy overseas aboard a ship, or fly to one of these forward-based units. If a platoon or boat detachment deployed to one of these units, then for the length of its

deployment it would fall under the operational control of the unit's commanding officer. Although the unit COs had a better understanding of their theaters than the SEAL Team commanding officers, they did not have contact with the deploying assets assigned to their units until they arrived in-theater. The units were essentially revolving doors; every six months new platoons and boat detachments arrived and others left.[11] Although all Naval Special Warfare assets are certified before they deploy, under the OOS the commanding officer who was responsible for taking these assets to war—the Unit CO—had never seen them before they showed up on his doorstep; thus, he never *really* knew what he was getting.

At the same time, operational requirements often outweigh liaison responsibilities, especially in today's high operational tempo (OPTEMPO) environment. Therefore, two of the units' primary functions—liaison responsibilities between NSW and other in-theater component commands and, even more importantly, maintaining continuity in relations between NSW Unit personnel and foreign counterparts—always had the potential of being relegated to the back-burner. This sort of unintended neglect particularly plagues a theater such as CENTCOM, where the operational tempo is high, the unit is small, and the language and cultural barriers are significant.

***d. The Center***

The NSWC, or Center, is Naval Special Warfare's primary individual skills training command. As with all training commands in the Navy, the Chief of Naval Education and Training (CNET) approves the Center's curriculum. Although the NSWC falls under CNET, the Naval Special Warfare community retains a considerable degree of autonomy in molding its own training pipelines. Under the OOS, the Center's main responsibility was Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training. The 27-week BUD/S course is the first school that an individual must complete in order to become a SEAL. BUD/S is the largest training program at the Center. However, it is not the only school that the Center runs. Under the OOS, NSWC was also responsible for the preliminary SWCC course, SDV operator training, MK-16 operator training, and various advanced training schools (e.g. the diving supervisor and range safety officer courses, the

[11] The units still are revolving doors under NSW-21; however the Unit CO no longer is required to function as a tactical commander for the SEAL platoons or SBU detachments.

static line jumpmaster course, and the NSW demolitions course). Although the Center was the primary training command, under the divisional bureaucratic strategy it was not the only training command. As we mentioned above, the Groups also had significant training responsibilities that transcended the Center. For instance, the Groups ran SEAL Tactical Training (STT), the second major course an individual must complete in the SEAL training pipeline. Because the Center was not the only source of training that existed under the OOS, 1) unnecessary redundancies occurred, (i.e. each Group ran its own STT); 2) the community lacked standardized tactics (i.e. each Group ran its training curriculum differently); and 3) since the training that the Groups ran did not fall under the auspices of CNET, there was a dearth of certified training curricula in the community.[12]

#### 4. Vertical and Lateral Coordination Under the Old Regime, an Argument for Organizational Transformation

What should be clear from the preceding discussion about the roles and responsibilities and how the various components of Naval Special Warfare functioned under the OOS is that the divisional bureaucratic strategy lent itself to commands that were perhaps more parochial than they needed to be. Specifically, with respect to the SEAL and SDV Teams and SBUs, prior to deployment there was no formal mechanism to get these assets to work together, even if they were all deploying to either the same unit or aboard the same ship. Although interoperability training did occur between the SEAL Teams and the SBUs, these training blocks were generally ad hoc and did not continue from work-up to work-up. Instead, interoperability training opportunities were often left to the initiative of the individual platoons, boat detachments, and training cells.

Since each of the Teams and SBUs was essentially a self-contained entity, and the Groups' interactions with their Teams' pre-deployment work-up cycles primarily consisted of overseeing the final ORE just before deployment, lateral coordination between Teams and SBUs, though not discouraged, was neither likely nor necessary. The focus of the Teams and the SBUs under the OOS was myopic. Their primary concern was preparing their next platoon or detachment for deployment, and not in

[12] CNET is the authoritative body in the Navy that is responsible for certifying and overseeing all of the service's education and training. Although training can take place without CNET approval (i.e. pre-deployment training by ships, submarines, air-squadrons, and SEAL Teams), a CNET-approved curriculum is like an accredited college course: others, and not just the people who taught you, recognize the training as transferable from community to community and from service to service.

looking to the broader strategic picture of how all Naval Special Warfare assets were going to be used in-theater. This myopic outlook, coupled with the lack of lateral communications between the Teams and SBUs, led to a stove-piping phenomenon within the community.

Stove-piping occurs when subunits of an organization interpret and execute their missions in such a way that they are either redundant or contrary to one another. With respect to the Naval Special Warfare community, some examples of stove-piping at the Team level could be found in different training cells teaching different fire and movement tactics, different supply departments issuing their personnel different gear, and different intelligence departments focusing on different information. Although these discrepancies did not prevent Naval Special Warfare from accomplishing its mission, they did create unnecessary work at the Team level. Why different Teams and boat units needed to perform redundant and potentially contrary tasks was one of the questions the framers of NSW-21 posed.

Every minute the Team or SBU spends on ancillary support tasks, no matter how important, detracts from its ability to focus on its primary operational mission. Thus, a second fair question to ask is, "Is the SEAL Team a war-fighting command or a support command?" Under the old divisional bureaucratic model, the Teams fell into a support role: a role that, for many of the reasons stated above, is less than optimal. Specifically, since each SEAL Team, SDV Team, and SBU was concerned with training and equipping two platoons, one SDV platoon, and three or four RHIB detachments and one MKV detachment, why not consolidate at least the training and equipping functions of each of the SEAL Teams under the Groups? Isn't the Groups' primary responsibility to provide support for *all* of their subordinate commands?

In this sense, centralization and standardization taking place in an information age that trumpets decentralized and diversified organizations makes a great deal of sense for Naval Special Warfare, given its mission and its discrete dynamic environment. In a military milieu that increasingly emphasizes joint operations and interoperability, one would find it imprudent for an organization as small and as specialized as Naval Special Warfare to perpetuate an organizational strategy that limits interoperability and effective

and efficient war-fighting capabilities within its own boundaries. As well, under the OOS, vertical coordination in the operational arena was truncated because the Team COs were primarily in charge of the logistical needs of the platoons: whereas, the Group commodore's ability to control the logistical aspects of his deployable assets was virtually non-existent. One should remember that the aim of the divisional bureaucracy is to create quasi-autonomous machine bureaucracies in the operating core; this necessarily suggests relaxed vertical coordination between the strategic apex, middle line, and operating core. However, these less formal vertical lines of communication do not come without a price. The price Naval Special Warfare paid for an organizational strategy which emphasized autonomy was reduced interoperability and the inability to sustain the deployment of the one man who knew his platoons best—the SEAL Team commanding officer. NSW-21 has set out to reverse this troubling fact as well.[13]

By alleviating the Teams of their training and equipping responsibilities, SEAL Team commanding officers will be given much more time to focus on the operational issues that confront their commands. Just as importantly, the NSW community will reduce the likelihood of stove-piping in its future. Centralization and standardization of training and equipment at the Group level will reduce redundancy, increase lateral communication between the SEAL Teams, and allow for the deployment of the entire SEAL Team. Under NSW-21, all platoons that come from the same Team will go through the same training pipeline, and will be required to work with each other as well as the SDV platoons and SBU detachments prior to deployment.

[13] We purposely did not discuss in detail the SDV Teams and the SBUs in this paragraph because under NSW-21 they will retain their training, equipping, and non-deployable status. Since these commands employ unique assets that require unique needs, folding them into the deployable SEAL Team paradigm of NSW-21 does not make sense. In particular, the SEAL Teams comprise the bulk of Naval Special Warfare's deployable assets and capabilities. Although the SDV platoons and SBU detachments are important and necessary assets to the NSW war-fighting package, their unique capabilities and larger logistical needs require one command to be dedicated to a smaller number of deployable assets. Thus, under NSW-21, the SEAL Team is the core deployable asset; however, six months prior to deployment the SEAL Team will convert into the NSW squadron, under which also will fall the SDV platoon and SBU detachments.

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# IV. NSW-21: IN SEARCH OF PERFECTION

## A. WHAT IS NSW-21?

What is NSW-21? We wondered what the answer to this question was ourselves when we began researching NSW-21. Sequestered in the tranquil halls of academia, we had heard only rumors, gossip, and some initial rumblings concerning Naval Special Warfare's transformation effort. Yet nearly everyone we spoke with in our first days of research agreed that NSW-21 was Naval Special Warfare's most significant reorganization effort to date. NSW-21 is not, however, the community's first bout with reorganization.

The first major NSW reorganization endeavor took place in 1983 when the community decommissioned the last of its Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs)—the Naval Special Warfare units formed out of the fledgling Navy Combat Demolition Units of WWII—and Boat Support Units (BSUs) of Vietnam fame. The UDTs were redesignated as either SEAL or SDV Teams, and the BSUs became Special Boat Units. Although the 1983 reorganization marked Naval Special Warfare's first step in an ongoing evolution—an evolution that seeks to move the community away from the strict amphibious support roles of WWII and Korea and towards combating unconventional and asymmetrical threats—it was nowhere near as fundamental a shift as NSW-21 represents. Essentially, what the 1983 reorganization did was change the names on the Naval Special Warfare map; it did not redraw its boundaries. Platoons and detachments remained the primary deployable units after the 1983 reorganization. Although the UDT platoons were now known as either SEAL or SDV platoons and the BSU detachments were called SBU detachments, the responsibilities of their parent commands—the SEAL and SDV Teams and SBUs—remained largely unchanged.

NSW-21's goals are much more ambitious in that they seek to transform Naval Special Warfare and help the community do its job better. The final two chapters of this thesis will explore the goals of NSW-21, how these goals seek to alleviate the challenges that the old organizational strategy posed to the community, and discuss some of the new

challenges that NSW-21 might create for Naval Special Warfare in the future. Thus we end this section with the same question we began it with, "What is NSW-21?"

In response to this question, Rear Admiral Eric T. Olson, the current WARCOM commander and the man who made the decision to implement NSW-21, makes the point that "NSW-21 is not a plan for reorganization, [as much as] it is a collection of five associated initiatives that, collectively, constitute a transformation that transcends reorganization." These five initiatives are: 1) the development of the NSW squadron, 2) the reorganization of the community's architecture, 3) the realignment of training programs, 4) the optimization of command and control relationships for deployed forces, and 5) the development of a Naval Special Warfare C4ISR infrastructure.[1] We now shall discuss these five initiatives in turn.

## B. DEVELOPING THE NSW SQUADRON

Under NSW-21, the NSW squadron will replace the SEAL platoon, SDV platoon, and SBU detachment as Naval Special Warfare's core deployable asset. The NSW squadron is not so much a new entity as it is a consolidation of disparate smaller units that already exist within the community. According to the NSW squadron concept, all three of Naval Special Warfare's deployable assets—SEAL platoons, SDVs, and SBU detachments—along with headquarters, operational support, and administrative elements—will merge to form a single, cohesive package that will fall under the command of a single commanding officer. As we mentioned earlier, the commanding officer of the NSW squadron will be the CO of the SEAL Team whose six platoons constitute the bulk of the squadron's operational forces.

Although the SDV Teams and the SBUs will continue to function as force providers under NSW-21, their platoons and detachments will be integrated into their respective squadrons on each coast. Thus, the SEAL platoons, SDV platoon, and SBU detachments will all merge to conduct a formalized interoperability-training phase prior to the squadron's six-month deployment. Similarly, the operational support element, which is composed of a Mobile Communications Team (MCT), a Tactical Cryptological Support detachment (TCS), and an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) detachment, will

[1] C4ISR stands for command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

report to the NSW squadron at the same time as the SDV platoon and SBU detachments. Like the SDV platoon and special boat detachments, the MCT, TCS, and EOD detachments only belong to the SEAL Team during the interoperability-training and deployment phases of the squadron's two-year deployment cycle. Figure 4.1 illustrates the hierarchy of the SEAL Team and NSW squadron under NSW-21, how these two entities relate to the four phases of the NSW squadron's two-year deployment cycle, and the point at which the SEAL Team, SDV platoon, SBU detachments, and operational support detachments merge to form the NSW squadron.

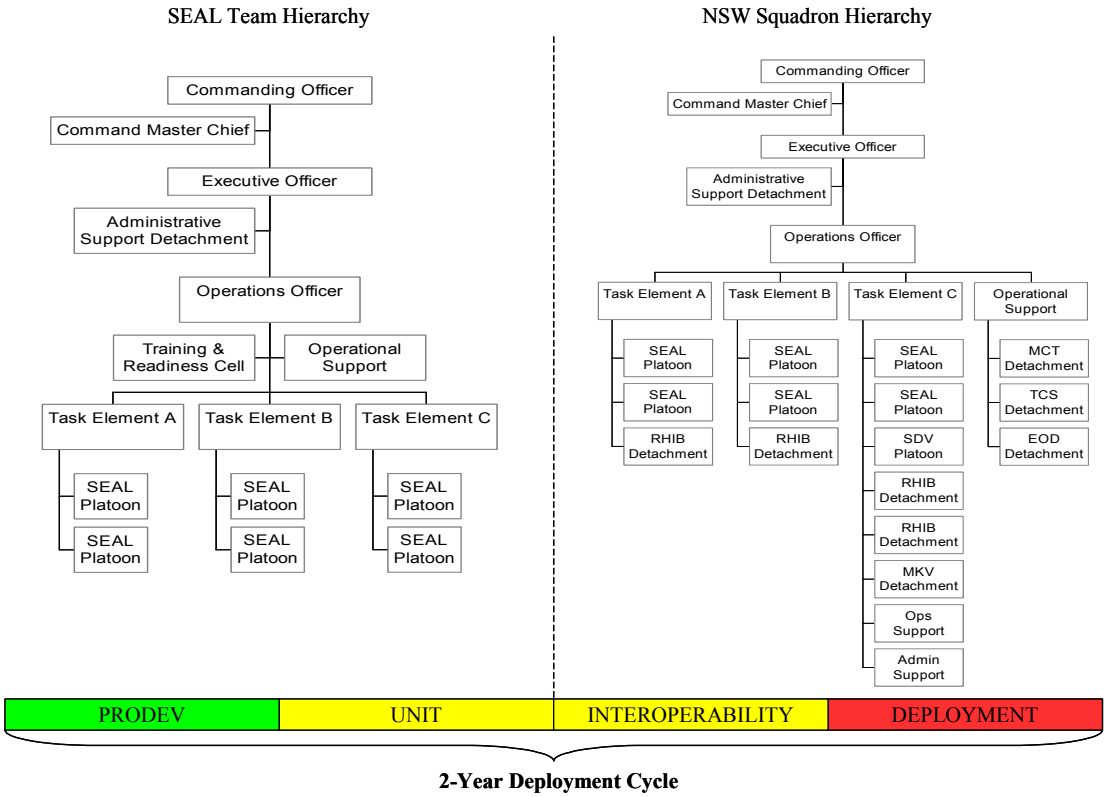


Figure 4.1. The NSW Two-Year Squadron Rotation Concept.

## C. RESTRUCTURING THE FORCE

To accommodate the NSW squadron model, Naval Special Warfare has devised the two-year deployment cycle illustrated in Figure 4.1. This deployment cycle is divided into four distinct six-month phases, which are listed as follows: professional development, unit-training, squadron interoperability-training, and deployment. The first

three phases, or eighteen months of the deployment cycle, are designed to 1) build upon one another, and 2) prepare the squadron for deployment in either a peacetime or wartime posture.

### 1. Professional Development Phase

During the professional development (PRODEV) phase, the SEAL Teams, SDV Teams, and SBUs begin to consolidate their platoons and detachments. The only operational assets that are attached to the SEAL Team during PRODEV are its platoons; the rest of the squadron's assets remain attached to their parent commands. The focus of the PRODEV phase is to qualify certain SEAL and SWCC operators in a variety of individual skills: for instance, sniper, freefall parachutist, diving supervisor, range safety officer, or jumpmaster qualification training. The PRODEV period is also reserved for the SEAL Team commanding officer to conduct any additional training that he feels necessary to prepare his SEAL platoons for the latter phases of the deployment cycle. An example of such training would be mission planning and marksmanship instruction.

### 2. Unit-Training Phase

The second phase in the two-year deployment cycle is the unit-training phase. During unit-training, the six SEAL platoons embark on a formalized and standardized training curriculum that is implemented by the NSW Group training detachment. The Group training detachments, which comprise the training cadres from each of the SEAL Teams under the old regime, represent the first major difference between NSW-21 and the old divisional bureaucratic strategy. Under NSW-21, the SEAL Teams no longer are responsible for conducting platoon-level training; this responsibility is now handled at the Group level. Hence, the creation of the training detachments renders the issue of different platoons from different Teams receiving different training moot. Both Groups ONE and TWO have one training detachment that reports to its respective commodores. The training detachments are primarily responsible for training the SEAL platoons from each of the SEAL Teams on its respective coast. In order to ensure minimal differences between the unit training curriculums on both coasts, the Groups' training detachments periodically will confer with one another to compare their training programs. This move towards a standardized training curriculum for SEAL platoons throughout the community

also will make the transition easier for individual SEALs transferring from Team to Team and from coast to coast.

Although the Group training detachment concept is sound, it is not flawless: the most obvious potential pitfall being regional training for the squadron's platoons. Although all of the deploying platoons will come from the same Team under NSW-21, they will not necessarily all deploy to the same regions of the world. Under NSW-21, the community will continue to maintain its commitment to the regional CINCs. Hence, it also will continue to require some level of competency in regionally training SEAL platoons.

This reality of the Naval Special Warfare environment may lead us to question the wisdom of a community-wide standardized training program. However, we believe this challenge to the training detachment concept is largely a paper tiger. Two important aspects of Naval Special Warfare will not change under NSW-21: 1) NSW leaders will continue to allow subordinates enough latitude to figure out how best to complete a job—in the case of the Group training detachments, the Group commodores are not likely to suddenly demand that their training detachments adhere to a set of training guidelines etched in stone simply because the Groups now conduct pre-deployment training. And 2) the training detachment will continue to be composed of the same individuals who constituted the Team-level training cells under the OOS. Thus, the regional experience of the disparate Team-level training cells will not be automatically lost, though it is critical that the training detachments make a concerted effort to retain the regional training capabilities that the Team-level training cells have cultivated over the years. Although regional training will have a greater impact in the interoperability-training phase than in the unit-training phase, this issue is one that the training detachments should consider sooner rather than later.

### 3. Squadron Interoperability Phase

The third phase of the two-year deployment cycle is the squadron interoperability-training (SIT) phase. During SIT, the SEAL Team CO once again controls the majority of his Team's training time; the SIT phase is when the SEAL Team undergoes its

metamorphosis into the NSW squadron.[2] Although the SDV platoon, SBU detachments, and operational support detachments will continue to report to their respective commands for day-to-day business and administrative needs during SIT, they will spend a significant amount of their time training with the squadron's six SEAL platoons. SIT is the block of the two-year deployment cycle that is reserved for interoperability-training between all of the squadron's assets, and this is when the commanding officer is able to see all of the pieces of his squadron in action. The SIT phase culminates with a squadron ORE, which will be conducted, monitored, and graded by each Group for its respective squadrons.

Since Squadron ONE (formerly SEAL Team ONE) on the west coast, and Squadron TWO (formerly SEAL Team TWO) on the east coast, have not conducted their OREs as of the writing of this thesis, a discussion regarding the nature of the squadron ORE would be speculative. Even so, under the old organizational strategy, an ORE cell at each of the Groups conducted the OREs for all of the SEAL and SDV platoons, while the Boat Squadrons conducted the OREs for their detachments. The purpose of the ORE under the old system was to certify individual platoons and detachments. Thus, even though a new batch of Naval Special Warfare assets deployed to the same regions of the world every six months, different platoons and detachments underwent different OREs according to separate schedules that were completely disconnected from one another. Since the shift under NSW-21 is away from platoons and detachments and towards the NSW squadron, the logical question with respect to the OREs is, "Will the focus of the ORE also shift from the platoon to the squadron?"

The OREs of Squadrons ONE and TWO should provide a definitive answer to this question. An important point to make is that since the squadron's headquarters element (e.g. CO, XO, OPS, CMC) will be expected to function as part of a battle staff while deployed, it seems imprudent for the squadron's ORE to remain platoon-centric. The squadron ORE must not only focus on tactical platoon and detachment-level skills but, more importantly, on headquarters-level planning and command and control skills as

[2] The standard rule of thumb under NSW-21 will be that the SEAL Team CO will control 1/3 of his Teams training during the Unit phase and the training detachment will control 2/3: during the SIT phase, this ratio is reversed: the CO controls 2/3 and the training detachment directs 1/3.

well. However, currently, the ORE cells at each of the Groups are structured to conduct only platoon-level OREs.

There is evidence that Naval Special Warfare is moving towards a squadron-centric ORE process. However, current funding and manpower issues could test the Groups' abilities to convert their old platoon-centric ORE cells into squadron-centric certification cells. Specifically, instead of conducting an ORE for one or two platoons at a time, the Groups will now be required to plan and coordinate an ORE for six platoons, in addition to an SDV platoon and multiple SBU detachments. Similarly, since the NSW squadron will be divided between two theaters of operation while deployed, a realistic ORE should focus on two theater-specific operational scenarios; however, such an ORE would inject yet another layer of complexity into a perhaps already strained squadron certification process. In any event, regardless of the possible future challenges of a squadron-centric ORE, an initially less than optimal squadron-level readiness exercise is superior to a continuation of the old regime's platoon-centric ORE process. If a squadron is expected to train and deploy as one unit, then it only makes sense that it also should be evaluated as a single entity.

#### 4. Deployment Phase

Whatever form the ORE process finally takes, upon its passage, the NSW squadron will be certified a deployable asset. The successful completion of the ORE signals the end of the squadron's eighteen-month pre-deployment work-up cycle; the squadron—with all of its forces, equipment, and training—will be ready to deploy. Each coast will deploy its squadrons somewhat differently, thus taking into account the operational and strategic requirements of the CINCs to whom they are beholden—though the general deployment schemes will be generally the same. Although we will cover the implications of Naval Special Warfare's new C2 structure for its deployed units in subsequent sections, it is important to note here that under NSW-21 the assets of the two deployed squadrons will be divided among the five in-theater NSW Units. At any given time, each coast will have one NSW squadron deployed overseas. Essentially, the two-year deployment cycle is predicated on the notion that one SEAL Team or NSW squadron will be going through one of the four six-month phases outlined above. The

two-year deployment cycle creates a rotation in which, every two years, the same squadrons will deploy during the same six-month period of time.

This added degree of predictability and stability in the squadron deployment schedule directly translates into an increased level of stability and predictability for the deploying personnel. Gone are the days when a SEAL or SWCC would come off of deployment and find that he was heading right back to where he had just come from for another sixth-month stint with another platoon. The formalized two-year deployment cycle, coupled with the fact that all the individuals at a SEAL Team will deploy, allows the individual operators to have a far greater degree of predictability and stability in their personal lives—a luxury that they never had in the past.

### 5. The New Commands and New Units of NSW-21

The reader may have noticed from Figure 3.1 that each NSW Group has only three SEAL Teams assigned to it, thus, provoking the question, "How does Naval Special Warfare propose to implement a two-year deployment cycle if the rotation requires one Team or squadron in each of the four phases?" The answer to this question leads us to a discussion about the changes to Naval Special Warfare's organizational architecture under NSW-21.

As we discussed in Chapter III, under the old organizational strategy, each SEAL Team comprised eight platoons, a training cell, and a number of support personnel (e.g. dive technicians, outboard motor mechanics, armories, parachute riggers etc.). Under NSW-21 the commands to which all of these individuals formally were assigned have changed. To accommodate the two-year deployment cycle, Naval Special Warfare will add two additional SEAL Teams on each coast: SEAL Team SEVEN in Coronado, CA and SEAL Team TEN in Little Creek, VA. These two new Teams will serve as the foundations for the two additional squadrons that are required to sustain a stable and predictable two-year deployment rotation.

Because NSW-21 is being undertaken with current fiscal and personnel constraints in mind, these two additional SEAL Teams will not represent an increase in the size of the Naval Special Warfare community. Instead, Teams SEVEN and TEN will be composed of personnel from the other six SEAL Teams. To make this transition

tenable, NSW has reduced the number of platoons at each of the SEAL Teams by two. Rather than eight platoons, each SEAL Team now will have only six. Reducing the number of platoons per Seal Team from eight to six will yield a remainder of six SEAL platoons on each coast: this will be the core of SEAL Teams SEVEN and TEN.

It is important to note that the two-platoon reduction at each of the SEAL Teams does not significantly impact the operational readiness of the Teams. As we mentioned in Chapter III, under the old regime, overseas operational requirements called for six SEAL platoons to be deployed from each coast at any one time. This requirement has not changed under NSW-21. Instead of twelve platoons deploying from six Teams, twelve platoons now will deploy as two squadrons. The quantity of forces deploying has not changed. But the mechanism by which they deploy has.

In addition to reducing the number of platoons at each of the SEAL Teams, NSW-21 also seeks to streamline the Teams in two other ways. The first, which we have discussed above, consolidates all pre-deployment training under the Groups' training detachment. And the second creates a logistics and support unit (LOGSU) on each coast. LOGSU ONE in Coronado, CA and LOGSU TWO in Little Creek, VA are responsible for equipping all of the Teams on their respective coasts. As with pre-deployment training, the SEAL Teams' equipping responsibilities has been moved out of their domain. But unlike the training detachments, the LOGSUs are separate commands that fall under the Groups. Although at first glance this might seem like a minor distinction, it is organizationally significant. The LOGSUs are separate commands on the same echelon as the SEAL Teams, whereas the training detachments are departments within the Groups. Thus, the LOGSUs have the added administrative responsibilities that are inherent to a command, while similar responsibilities for the training detachments will remain with the Groups.

Whether it is sensible to make the LOGSUs units rather than detachments is an issue that will doubtless work itself out in the coming years. Perhaps the most compelling argument for making the LOGSUs separate commands is that the quality of the logistical support they can offer the Teams will be superior to that they could offer if they were detachments. Since the LOGSUs will be commanded by a supply officer who

does not fall under the Naval Special Warfare promotion scheme, and since the LOGSUs will have one of the biggest responsibilities of any of the subordinate commands under the Groups, it is essential that NSW provide an incentive for attracting competent, high-ranking supply officers to this crucial billet. One simple, yet highly effective, means of reaching this end is to make the LOGSU a command-screened billet.

Each of the LOGSUs is commanded by a post-command, captain-select supply officer. The LOGSUs are made up of the support departments that were once located at each of the Teams under the old regime. Therefore, the diving, air operations, armory, communications, 1st lieutenant, medical, and supply departments that once were assigned to the SEAL Teams under the OOS now have been assigned to the LOGSUs. In addition to equipping the SEAL Teams, maintaining operational gear, and providing medical support, the LOGSUs also run and maintain Naval Special Warfare's multiple range and training facilities—responsibilities that formally belonged to the Groups.

The LOGSUs' responsibilities are broad and critical to the success of Naval Special Warfare's mission. Although both the training detachments and the LOGSUs' roles are equally important, the above discussion should allow the reader to appreciate the difference between the two, and why the LOGSU is a command and the training detachment is not. The most significant differences between the two are the desire to attract high-caliber supply officers to the LOGSU, and the size and scope of the LOGSUs as opposed to the training detachments.[3] By way of comparison, under the old regime, the training cell constituted a department at the Team, whereas the support departments constituted seven.

The NSW squadron concept, coupled with the need for the creation of two new SEAL Teams to accommodate its two-year deployment cycle, makes the training detachments and the LOGSUs all the more vital to Naval Special Warfare's continued success. The SEAL Teams are no longer quasi-autonomous units capable of accomplishing training and equipping responsibilities by themselves. Thus, the success

[3] Not to say that NSW does not want high-caliber training officers as well. However, the training officer is a SEAL. Since NSW is largely in control of detailing its officers to appropriate billets, and it has no control over how supply officers are detailed, finding an appropriate training officer is much easier than finding a well-suited supply officer.

or failure of the NSW squadron concept is strongly linked to the success or failure of the training detachments and LOGSUs.

## D. REALIGNING TRAINING

We have already briefly touched on some of the differences between NSW-21 and the old organizational strategy with respect to training. However, the elimination of the Team-level training cells in favor of a consolidated Group-level training detachment only represents one small facet of NSW-21's third initiative. The realignment of training affects more than just the manner in which SEAL platoons will be trained in the future. In fact, this initiative's main focus is on how to transform individual SEAL and SWCC operators from inexperienced recruits into competent, capable, and mature warriors. Besides the establishment of the training detachments, NSW-21 also will develop a training ladder, and transfer many of its former individual skills training responsibilities to the NSWC to accomplish this goal.

### 1. The Training Ladder

The Naval Special Warfare training ladder refers to the development of standardized training pipelines for both SEAL and SWCC personnel. Although the training ladders are different for SEALs and SWCCs, the general model is the same. As a SEAL or SWCC progresses from being a perspective candidate to a deployable operator, he will proceed through three distinct stages of skills training: individual, unit, and squadron. The individual skills level focuses on training the SEAL or SWCC candidate basic and advanced skills he will need to be able to function within a platoon or boat detachment. For SEALs, individual skills training begins with BUD/S, and for the SWCCs, entry-level training takes the form of the SWCC basic course. Both of these training curricula represent the first hurdle one must jump on the long road to becoming a competent and successful Naval Special Warfare operator.

Following the completion of either BUD/S or the SWCC basic course, the fledgling operator then proceeds to advanced individual skills training. SEAL Qualification Training (SQT, which was formally STT) represents the SEAL candidate's next training wicket, while the SWCC indoctrination/intermediate course (SWCC I) represents the SWCC candidate's next step in the training pipeline. Upon successful

completion of SQT and SWCC I, the SEAL and SWCC candidates are awarded their warfare insignias and become full-fledged SEAL and SWCC operators. However, this only marks the beginning of the continuous individual skills training that is required to gain and maintain constant and vigilant combat readiness.

Following the completion of either SQT or SWCC I, the SEAL or SWCC attends follow-on specialty schools to prepare him to fulfill a particular niche within his future SEAL or SDV platoon or SBU detachment. Although a detailed discussion about every skills school that a SEAL or SWCC might attend throughout his career in Naval Special Warfare is beyond the scope of this thesis, some examples of follow-on specialty schools are as follows: airborne, SDV & MK16 operator, medical, communications, sniper, outboard motor repair, intelligence, and dive maintenance training. Though this list is far from complete, it should give the reader an appreciation for the disparate areas of proficiency that one or more SEAL and SWCC operators must possess in order to make their platoon or detachment a combat-ready unit. Unlike BUD/S, SWCC I, and SQT, SEALs and SWCCs can attend these specialty schools throughout their careers.

Once the SEAL or SWCC is proficient in a number of individual skills, he is ready to be assigned to an operational platoon or detachment. This assignment marks the next step up the training ladder. During the unit training stage, the SEAL or SWCC learns to integrate his expertise into a platoon or detachment. The focus of this stage is no longer on individual skills, but rather on unit skills; the center of gravity shifts from the person to the team. Although the unit-training phase of the two-year deployment cycle represents the bulk of the formal unit-training stage, additional unit-training may occur during the PRODEV phase of the pre-deployment work-up as well. Though PRODEV is primarily designed so that SEALs and SWCCs can attend specialty schools, it is also the time when the SEAL and SDV Teams and SBUs begin to consolidate their platoons and detachments and begin initial unit-level training.

Now that the SEAL or SWCC has mastered his individual skills as an operator, and his platoon or detachment has mastered its unit-level skills, the SEAL or SWCC and his platoon or detachment are ready to ascend to the final rung of the training ladder—the squadron level. SIT is the final phase of the pre-deployment work-up prior to

deployment, as well as the most involved and difficult phase of the three pre-deployment phases. Only a training ladder solidly grounded at its base allows for a smooth transition to this final and critical phase.

The creation of a formalized training pipeline in which a SEAL or SWCC is comfortable, competent, and confident in his individual skills, as well as his platoon's skills, creates an environment which allows the squadron's commanding officer to put the parts of his squadron together as efficiently and effectively as possible. By the time the platoons and detachments have reached the SIT stage, individual strengths and weaknesses will already have been determined, and platoon or detachment-level standard operating procedures will have been long established. The SEAL and SDV platoons, SBU detachments, and operational support elements will be able to focus their full attention towards training as a task-oriented unit that is organized to meet the wartime and contingency operations of the regional CINCs to which they will deploy. To illustrate what we mean by this, Figure 4.2 depicts the NSW-21 training ladder as a triangle with the ultimate goal of a deployable, combat-ready NSW squadron resting upon a firm foundation of solid individual and unit-level skills training.

### 2. Transition of Appropriate Training Programs to the NSWC

The second goal of the training realignment initiative is to transition individual skills level training from the Groups to the Naval Special Warfare Center. As we mentioned in Chapter III, under the old organizational strategy, the Groups were responsible for conducting a bevy of individual skills and specialty training. This caused the Groups to focus more on training the individual and less on training the unit.

Also, as we mentioned above, the Group played virtually no role in training platoons. Among the individual skills and specialty schools that the Groups oversaw and coordinated were STT, sniper, cold weather, photo intelligence, communications, close quarter combat, and demolitions training. If one refers to Figure 4.2, one will realize that all of these courses are on the individual rung of the training ladder. If one of the goals of NSW-21 is to standardize platoon and squadron interoperability training at the Group echelon, then it makes a great deal of sense for Naval Special Warfare to move individual-skills training away from the Groups and to the Center.

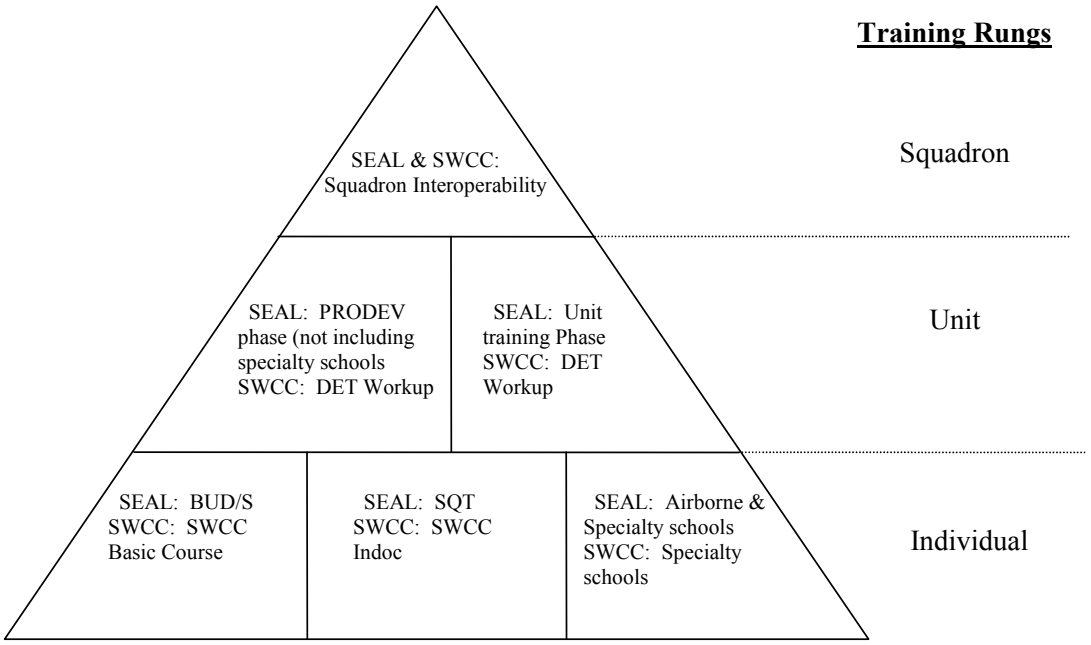


Figure 4.2. The NSW Training Ladder.

Since the NSWC focus always has been on individual-skills training, the question that NSW-21's planners asked was why shouldn't the Center be in charge of all individual-skills training? Transferring appropriate training programs to the Center not only centralizes all of Naval Special Warfare's individual-skills training, but also frees the Groups to focus their training efforts on their war-fighting units.[4]

This transition also will allow NSW's individual-skills and specialty schools to enjoy the benefits of an institution like the Center, which officially falls under the auspices of CNET. By moving all individual-skills training to the Center, the community will be able to define training standards, formalize curricula, provide credentials, and certify the instructors for all of its individual-skills and specialty schools. Although this might sound like a minor detail to someone who is unfamiliar with the special operations community writ large, this is in fact a detail of major importance. Although there were training standards and formalized curricula under the old regime, they varied from coast

[4] Although the SBUs still run their own SWCC I courses, there is an initiative to move the SWCC I course to the NSWC, and establish it as a SWCC Advanced (A) school, therefore, making it the special boat equivalent to SQT.

to coast, and the Groups' individual-training and specialty schools lacked both credentials and certified instructors. Since the Groups were not, by definition, training commands, they also were not afforded the benefits of official recognition as providers of CNET-controlled schools. In other words, though one may have received excellent training at a Group's school or part of a platoon work-up, other special operations communities and the military in general would not recognize that training as legitimate.

Why, meanwhile, should this matter? If the reader recalls from Chapter III the discussion about the competitors within Naval Special Warfare's discrete dynamic environment, then he or she may remember that there is intense competition among Army, Navy, and Marine Corps special operations assets for a piece of the operational pie. All things being equal, a CINC's or task force commander's decision to use one of these assets on a particular operation may very well come down to his picking the unit that is "certified" to do the mission. For instance, imagine you were a general deliberating on which special operations asset to assign to a mission that involved mountain climbing. Proceeding from the assumption that each of the units was equally capable, and that the only difference between them was that one unit had documentation that it had three certified lead-climbers and the other two units did not, then which unit would you be inclined to pick?

## E. OPTIMIZING COMMAND AND CONTROL RELATIONSHIPS FOR DEPLOYED FORCES

Although training issues and providing credentials to non-NSW commanders will help Naval Special Warfare assets better do their jobs in the future, perhaps the most important aspect of NSW-21 in ensuring that the community stays relevant is the optimization of command and control relationships for the deployed NSW squadrons. These optimizations seek to accomplish three specific objectives: 1) defining and formalizing Naval Special Warfare's relationships between special operations and naval component commanders; 2) providing a mechanism for transferring command and control from one operational commander to another, and 3) implementing the Joint Chiefs of Staff deployment order process. Each of these objectives focuses on ensuring that the NSW squadron remains a relevant peacetime and wartime force in the future.

In the past, NSW operators, officers, and planners have focused on the tactical aspects of maritime special operations. Yet, Naval Special Warfare is a *strategic* asset, and should be treated as such by those both inside and outside the community. As the current war against terrorism demonstrates, special operations forces are mandated to accomplish political objectives in a time of crisis; likewise, they also can and arguably should be called upon to achieve policy requirements in more tranquil times. A focus on the tactical domain, no matter how important, must never overshadow national security objectives in the political domain. These objectives can be adequately addressed only at the operational and strategic levels of planning. However, under the old divisional strategy, the SEAL Teams focused the bulk of their attention on training and equipping. Whereas Naval Special Warfare, in general, operated under a paradigm in which tactical planning obscured operational and strategic considerations. Shifting the war-fighting focus from the SEAL, SDV, or SBU platoon or detachment to an NSW squadron that comprises the command and control needs of all three of these assets will shift the focus of Naval Special Warfare planners—particularly at the NSW Units—away from purely tactical considerations towards those that are more operational and strategic in nature.

### 1. Defining and Formalizing NSW Command and Control Relationships with In-Theater Component Commanders

Under the old organizational strategy, the job of defining NSW's command and control relationships to regional commanders largely fell to the NSW Unit commanders. However, as we mentioned in Chapter III, the NSW Units also were responsible for tactical command and control of the deployed platoons and detachments. Although these two tasks complemented one another, they were not necessarily treated equally. From a strategic or even operational perspective, one would assume that the majority of the NSW Unit's time was spent formalizing, defining, and maintaining command and control relationships between itself and the in-theater special operations and navy commanders. However, this focus was not the case under the old regime. Since the NSW Unit commander was responsible for the tactical command and control of the platoons and detachments that embarked on in-theater missions, the majority of the Unit commander's time was spent coordinating efforts on the tactical rather than the operational level. Although it is understandable that the NSW Unit spent most of its time on tactical

command and control efforts—since the operators down-range are always paramount—this focus on tactics came at the expense of developing formalized operational command and control relationships.

Under NSW-21, the deployment of a tactical command and control battle staff, consisting of the squadron's headquarters element, will allow the NSW Unit to focus its efforts on coordinating between itself and in-theater special operations and navy commanders. This redefined role for the NSW Units will go a long way to helping develop a formalized set of command and control relationships at the operational level (and even strategic level) between Naval Special Warfare and the in-theater component commanders.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the proposed command and control relationships between the NSW squadrons, the overseas Units, the regional special operations commands, and the numbered naval fleets for each coast. An important point worth noting with respect to Figures 4.3 and 4.4 is that under NSW-21, the squadron's commanding officer will be subordinate to the Unit CO. By deploying a tactical battle staff in the form of a squadron headquarters element, the Unit commanding officer no longer has to straddle the line between the tactical and operational levels. He now will be able to devote his complete attention to thinking as an operational planner, thereby playing a crucial role in the development of a formalized set of command and control relationships for Naval Special Warfare and the in-theater operational commanders.

After reading the discussion above, one may be tempted to ask the question, "What is the purpose of these relationships between NSW and the in-theater special operations and navy commanders anyway?" Given that the aim of NSW-21 is to transform Naval Special Warfare into a war-fighting organization that is structured the same in peacetime and war, well-defined and formal command and control relationships with the in-theater commanders is simply one more step towards achieving this goal. By establishing these relationships prior to either a contingency or war, Naval Special Warfare will be able to accomplish two key objectives. First, it will be able to shift as rapidly as possible to a fighting posture.

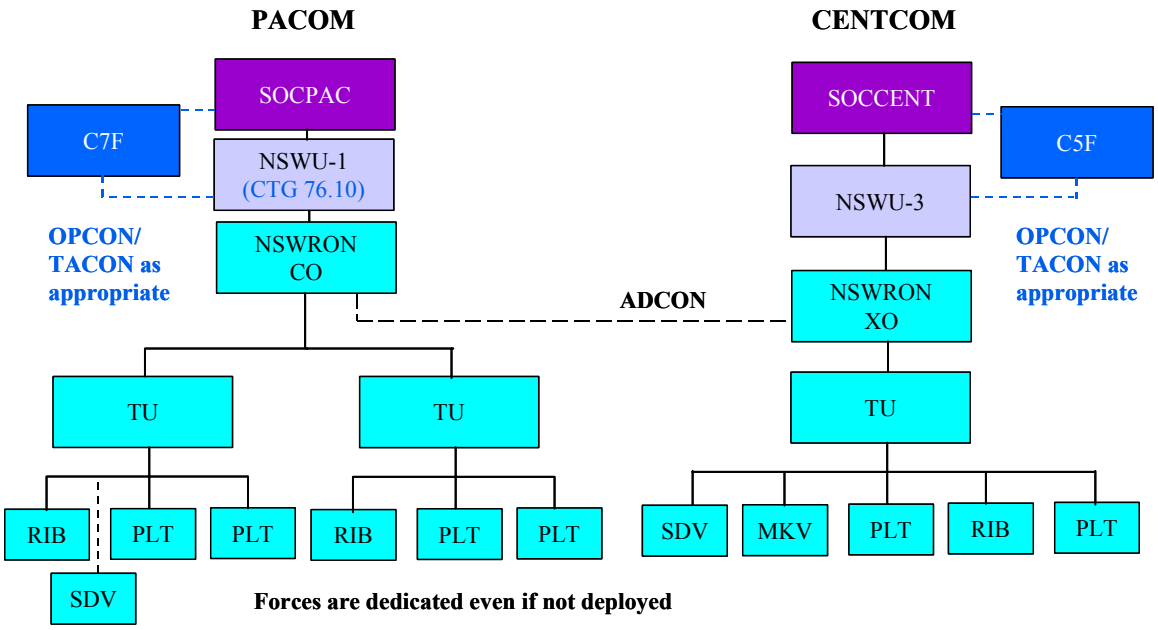


Figure 4.3. NSW's Squadron C-2 Structure on the West Coast.

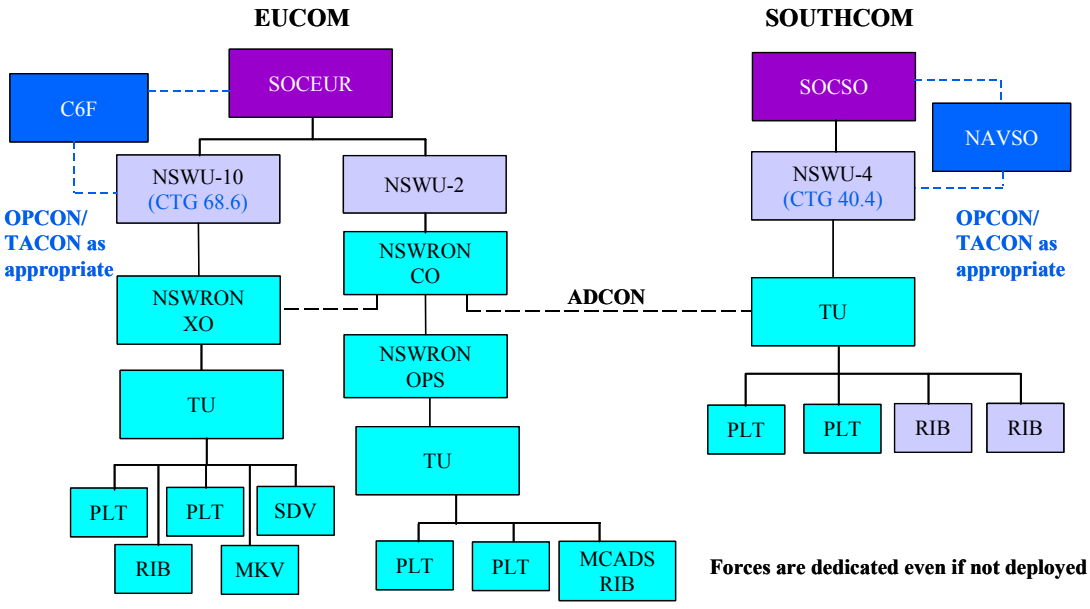


Figure 4.4. NSW's Squadron C-2 Structure on the East Coast.

And second, NSW will gain a seat at the operational planners' table and, thus, increase its odds at being selected over its competitors for combat operations.

### 2. Providing a Mechanism for Transferring Command and Control between Operational Commanders

Another important command and control consideration when it comes to Naval Special Warfare forces being able to operate in virtually the same manner in peacetime or war is the creation of a mechanism for transferring operational and tactical control of squadron forces between theater and operational commanders. Currently, if NSW forces need to be transferred between theaters or between different operational commanders in-theater, then this is done on an ad hoc basis. NSW assets that are located in one theater, barring a crisis, rarely are considered for operations and exercises in another theater. An exception to this rule would be a platoon that is deployed aboard a naval flotilla, such as a carrier battle group, which regularly pass between theaters as part of its routine deployment schedule.[5] Similarly, two NSW assets that fall under different component commanders in the same theater generally do not operate together.[6] Although there has been a precedent set in CENTCOM where forces attached to NSW Unit THREE have been used for Fifth Fleet operations, such operations are not yet established ways of doing business in every theater. The NSW squadron concept establishes a mechanism whereby operational and tactical control can be transferred between commanders in two ways. First, and perhaps most obviously, the squadron's commanding officer is ultimately in charge of all of the NSW forces that are deployed to his two theaters of responsibility. For the NSW squadron concept to work, the commanding officer must be able to travel freely between theaters in order to respond to crises. Since moving the man will be a relatively simple matter, transferring his command and control relationships to different theaters and operational commanders is another matter. For the squadron's commanding officer to be an effective tactical commander, the transfer of his command and control relationships must occur rapidly as well. Although the exact procedures for

[5] Examples of these kinds of deployments are SEAL strike-platoons that are deployed from the East Coast aboard aircraft carriers. During their sixth months at sea, the carrier usually transits from the Mediterranean in EUCOM to the Arabian Gulf in CENTCOM.

[6] An example of this situation is a SEAL platoon attached to an amphibious readiness group (ARG) and one attached to an NSW Unit. Although they may be in the same theater, one platoon, in this case the ARG platoon falls under the auspices of the in-theater naval component commander, while the other platoon belongs to the in-theater special operations commander.

transferring operational control between theaters and component commanders has not yet been worked out, Squadrons ONE and TWO will be establishing the paradigm for future squadrons to follow. Since all the squadrons will have the same command and control hierarchy, how squadron commanders move between theaters and what operational commanders they will report to will not change from squadron deployment to squadron deployment.

The second, and less obvious, way in which the NSW squadron helps create a mechanism for transferring command and control relationships lies in the squadron's interoperable platoons. Although the likelihood of a full squadron mission profile is remote, there is a high probability that an entire squadron's task element, consisting of SEAL and SDV platoons, SBU detachments, and operational support detachments, may be called upon to accomplish a joint mission. Since one of the task element's platoons or detachments may be attached to a navy ship, while the others remain on terra firma at the NSW Unit, if the need arises to combine the platoons and detachments into a task element, then there should be a formalized process by which this can occur. As with the commanding officer's situation, the specifics of this mechanism will be determined during Squadron ONE's and Squadron TWO's deployments. Then, once the first two squadrons have set the precedent, the task of formalizing the mechanism by which command and control is transferred should be relatively simple.

A single statement can summarize our discussion regarding the mechanism for transferring command and control at the operational level. The standardized architecture of the NSW squadron will allow for standardized relationships between it and the in-theater operational commanders. The individuals in the NSW squadron will change every six months, but the locations and functions of the three task elements and headquarters element will not. The NSW squadron itself will help optimize command and control, hence affording the squadron commanding officer much more flexibility in how he task-organizes his forces. This capability will be far greater than the Unit COs ever had under the old regime.

### 3. Implementing the Joint Chiefs of Staff Deployment Order Process

The Joint Chiefs of Staff deployment order (JCS DEPORD) process is a formalized procedure for deploying department of defense (DOD) combatant assets from the United States to regional theaters of operations, and transferring DOD forces between those theaters. President Reagan signed the JCS DEPORD process into law in 1986 as an amendment to Title 10 of that year's Goldwater-Nichols "Defense Reorganization Act." The Goldwater-Nichols Act was further amplified by the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the 1987 "National Defense Authorization Act," which established USSOCOM and assigned all Army, Navy, and Air Force special operations forces to the new functional CINC. According to the Goldwater-Nichols and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment, all USSOCOM assets, to include Naval Special Warfare, were mandated to deploy with a JCS DEPORD. (Heinz, 2001)

However, currently all Naval Special Warfare assets do not deploy under the JCS DEPORD process. NSW assets that deploy aboard gray-hulled Navy ships traditionally have deployed according to the Global Naval Force Projection Plan (GNFPP). GNFPP is essentially the Navy's version of the JCS DEPORD. While in the continental United States (CONUS), Navy carrier battle groups and amphibious readiness groups—the flotillas that NSW assets deploy on—are component commands of the Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), which is a command that can deploy forces under GNFPP. Naval Special Warfare, however, is a component command of USSOCOM a command that cannot deploy under GNFPP. By law, *all* NSW assets must deploy under a JCS DEPORD and not GNFPP. In the real world, the secretary of defense, whether under a JCS DEPORD or GNFPP, must approve the transfers of forces between theaters. Yet since all NSW assets must deploy to a particular theater according to the specifications of their JCS DEPORD, technically speaking NSW assets are not authorized to deploy from CONUS aboard ship. This is because ships, by their very nature, constantly move from theater to theater—a luxury that GNFPP provides for, but that the JCS DEPORD does not.

Although the law has been largely ignored until recently, USSOCOM is now mandating that *all* of its assets deploy with a JCS DEPORD. This mandate has resulted

in much consternation between USSOCOM and the Navy. By deploying all NSW forces according to the JCS DEPORD process, USSOCOM essentially will strip conventional Navy commanders of some of their control over NSW assets. Since the JCS DEPORD applies to in-theater assets and the GNFPP applies to deployed ships on the high seas, by deploying NSW assets according to the JCS DEPORD process, SOC and NSW commanders will maintain control of deployed NSW platoons and detachments, *even if* they are aboard ship. This bothers the conventional Navy because, under NSW-21, the NSW squadron's commanding officer, and not the amphibious or carrier commander, will be the person vested with the power to determine how long NSW assets spend aboard ship, and how and when they will be used.

The fear of the conventional Navy is that since NSW platoons and detachments will no longer deploy aboard ship for six-month tours, Naval Special Warfare slowly will abandon its historical amphibious support mission in favor of missions that are land-based, riverine, and littoral in nature. Although such a slippery slope argument may seem logically dubious, those outside Naval Special Warfare and USSOCOM have not rejected it out of hand.[7]

Aside from the legalistic aspects that the JCS DEPORD debate raises itself, the community-wide implementation of the process will also help NSW do its job better in two other significant ways. First, since the national command authority (NCA) must approve a JCS DEPORD, implementation of the process across the board will translate into a higher strategic airlift priority for all NSW assets. In a military world typified by rapid decisive actions and limited numbers of aerial assets to move ever more forces, the higher the strategic airlift priority one has the better. The JCS DEPORD will help ensure that Naval Special Warfare will *always* be able to get to the fight as rapidly and reliably as possible.

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[7] Given the legalistic nature of the NSW/ USSOCOM position and its tendency to smack of lawyerly loopholes and legerdemain, it is not difficult for one to imagine a group of conventionally-minded, very senior, and very parochial officers who possess enough political clout to render the entire argument moot by pushing for another two-line amendment to Goldwater-Nichols which states, "the JCS DEPORD process does not apply to *any* forces deployed aboard naval vessels." Fortunately, such an amendment is not in the works. In any event, the legalistic argument for the implementation of the JCS DEPORD process for all deployable Naval Special Warfare assets should not be allowed to define the debate between NSW/ USSOCOM and the conventional Navy.

The second benefit to be gained from this process is that the Secretary of Defense will personally approve all Naval Special Warfare deployments, thus giving maritime SOF higher visibility with the NCA. Although one might find this benefit of the JCS DEPORD process trite, the development of JCS DEPORDs for each of the regional CINCs will ensure that the Secretary of Defense always has a firm grasp on what his maritime special operations capabilities are around the world, thereby allowing him to use Naval Special Warfare as it should be used: as a tactical force with strategic consequences.

## F. DEVELOPING A C4ISR INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE

If Naval Special Warfare really is to be an effective strategic asset, then it also must have access to the finest intelligence and the most robust command and control structure in the military. The final initiative of the NSW-21 transformation is the creation of a solid C4ISR backbone for Naval Special Warfare. Like the backbone of an organic vertebrate, a robust C4ISR infrastructure will allow Naval Special Warfare to manage information, synthesize intelligence, and produce a useful information product from a few central locations on the home front. Each SEAL Team will no longer have an intelligence department that is responsible for gathering and processing information for its operators. Instead, this function will occur at a Group-level Mission Support Center (MSC) whose sole responsibility is to provide relevant tactical intelligence to the deployed NSW squadrons. The MSC will play a key role in Naval Special Warfare's creation of a strong C4ISR infrastructure, for its job will be to find valuable nuggets in an otherwise murky ocean of information.

The first MSC, which was recently put in place at NSW Group ONE, will be the central information hub for all of NSW's west coast assets. The MSC will provide deployed units with relevant and up-to-date information that will facilitate the successful execution of wartime and contingency operations. Although the MSC has the capacity to function as a command and control center, its main focus is to provide relevant tactical intelligence, not to command deployed units from the home front. The MSC is intended to give the deployed NSW squadron the ability to reach back to the NSW Group and retrieve information that is critical to the success of an operation. The MSC will be

manned around the clock by operators and naval information specialists and, thus, will be accessible to forward deployed squadrons at all times. In essence, information from the MSC will be only a phone call away.

Included in NSW's attempt to create a solid C4ISR infrastructure is the use of the Special Warfare Automated Mission Planning System (SWAMPS). SWAMPS is a Windows based mission-planning program that allows the NSW squadron to effectively and efficiently perform distributive and collaborative planning functions in virtually every corner of the world. Along with SWAMPS, the NSW Command also provides the NSW squadrons with laptop computers, printers, and network hubs for use during their deployments. The SWAMPS suite is the operational equivalent of the MSC; it is the technology that deployed NSW squadrons will use to reach back to the MSC to obtain relevant tactical intelligence. The high degree of connectivity between the deployed squadron and the MSC will allow planning to occur not only among members of a platoon, task element, or squadron, but also among NSW personnel half a world away.

## G. THE PARADOX REVISITED

We began this thesis by posing a paradoxical question; "Why has Naval Special Warfare embarked on a transformation effort that seeks to centralize and standardize the community when most organizational theorists believe that the future of bureaucracies tends towards decentralization and diversification?" The time finally has come for us to resolve this paradox.

Taken together, the five initiatives—which we have discussed in this chapter, and which constitute the NSW-21 transformation—should bring to mind Mintzberg's machine bureaucracy. At first glance, they seem to be at odds with the decentralized and diversified world of the future. Nevertheless, as we have demonstrated, the reasons behind all five of these initiatives are sensible and pragmatic, insofar as they are grounded in a thorough analysis of Naval Special Warfare and the discrete dynamic environment in which it operates. The planners of NSW-21 did not set out to flatten the structure of the community's hierarchy or, for that matter, to shift it from a divisional bureaucracy to a professional bureaucracy or adhocracy. They did, however, set out to create an organizational strategy that would allow Naval Special Warfare to do its job

more effectively and efficiently than it has in the past. They did so with a focus on allowing operators to concentrate their full attention on fighting wars, and not on training and logistical support. In crafting NSW-21, its planners thus put in motion an organizational transformation that uniquely belongs to Naval Special Warfare.

Although NSW-21 promotes centralization and standardization at the operational level, it provides for decentralization and diversification at the tactical level. For instance, the NSW squadron will break the sixteen-man platoon paradigm by making the squadron and not the SEAL platoon the core war-fighting component of Naval Special Warfare in the future. This fact is significant because NSW assets will be tailored to the mission rather than the mission being tailored to the force.

Under the old regime, the sixteen-man platoon along with one or two SBU detachments were what an in-theater commander considered to be a viable maritime SOF capability. However, there are many missions—such as hydrographic reconnaissance, sniper missions, special reconnaissance, and foreign internal defense operations—which Naval Special Warfare is routinely called upon to accomplish that do not require an entire sixteen-man SEAL platoon. Non-NSW commanders never even considered that effective task-organization for a SEAL platoon might be to break the platoon into two or three squads to accomplish multiple missions. NSW-21 will allow for this option, since control of Naval Special Warfare assets will be put back into the hands of SEAL commanders. Finally, SEALs will once again determine their missions and how best to conduct them.

The paradigm shift from the sixteen-man platoon to NSW squadron offers a rather satisfying answer to the paradoxical question we raised. For centralization and decentralization, and standardization and diversification, are not necessarily mutually exclusive ends. As we have discussed throughout this thesis, all organizations are different and, consequently, employ different means for accomplishing their goals. Decentralization and diversification throughout a bureaucracy might be a sound organizational strategy for a publishing house or software company, but it is not a sound strategy for Naval Special Warfare. In fact, an overall organizational strategy, which *has* tended towards decentralization and diversification, has led Naval Special Warfare down

a road of redundancy, inefficiency, and parochialism. Without question Naval Special Warfare requires decentralization and diversification. However, NSW only requires decentralization and diversification at certain levels of its bureaucracy.

The operators in the SEAL and SDV platoons and SBU detachments are the men who are required to do the hard missions. They are the ones who are called upon to operate on the fringe of war and peace. In this complex and dynamic environment, these are also the men who most need decentralization and diversification. They are the individuals who must be supported by an effective, stable, and efficient bureaucratic infrastructure in order to get the job done in the best way possible. For Naval Special Warfare, this means decentralization and diversification at the bottom with coherency and consistency at the top. However, as well-designed and capable of achieving this goal NSW-21 may appear to be, the transformation will not necessarily be smooth.

# V. THE ROCKY SHOALS

## A. WHAT MATTERS, WHAT DOESN'T, AND WHAT CAN'T BE HELPED

The implications of NSW-21 are as broad as the transformation effort itself. It should come as no surprise that a transformation effort that touches every facet of Naval Special Warfare would cause quite a few waves within the community. Some of NSW-21's implications are already thought to be good and some bad. And then there are there the unintended consequences—some of which are already surfacing. In this final chapter, we will focus on those consequences that are already apparent, and discuss how these might pose challenges to Naval Special Warfare in the future.

We have already discussed some potential problems—such as the implications for the squadron-centric ORE and the risk of losing regionally-oriented training—which NSW-21 must overcome in order to emerge as a successful organizational strategy for the community. Other issues, such as potential personality conflicts between squadron and unit commanding officers (both O-5 commanders), SEAL and SWCC manning issues, additional funding for the extra individuals deploying under the NSW-21 squadron concept, equipping issues for the additional SEAL Teams, strains on the officer and enlisted evaluation processes, and difficulties in personnel detailing are additional issues that will likely need to be addressed under the NSW-21 regime. Although an analyst could probably devote an entire thesis to any one of these issues, we only will discuss and analyze them briefly. None of these issues represent the most serious challenge to the success of the NSW-21 transformation; however, each does pose unique problems for the community and, thus, warrants some discussion.

### 1. Squadron/Unit Relations

The first issue worth discussing concerns the conflicts that perhaps will arise between unit and squadron COs. Although conflicts between senior leaders are a serious matter, these are largely personality driven, and are bound to vary from squadron to squadron, and from unit to unit. Good CO-to-CO relations are in both the Squadron CO and Unit CO's best interests. If the establishment of a good working relationship

between the two leaders should fail, then both commanding officers will set themselves up for a potential breakdown in both the squadron's and unit's command and control hierarchies. Such an outcome would portend disaster for both leaders. Professionalism, the urge to succeed, and the desire to complete the mission should outweigh any animosity that might exist between the two commanding officers. And as the squadron deployment becomes a routine fact of life in the community, the more likely it will be that the unit and squadron COs' relationship will become routine as well.

### 2. Junior Officer and Senior Petty Officer Evaluations

The enlisted and junior officer evaluation processes, on the other hand, are a little bit tougher nuts to crack. Under the old organizational strategy, the time phased deployment of two-platoons-per-Team-per-six-months allowed for an institutionalized method of ranking personnel. For example, if a commanding officer had to rank six platoon commanders of equal caliber during an officer fitness evaluation cycle, the old system allowed for the CO to rank his two Lieutenants on deployment as One and Two, the two Lieutenants just getting ready to deploy as Three and Four, and his two new Lieutenants just forming up in new platoons as Five and Six. With the next evaluation cycle, when Lieutenants One and Two would have already transferred, the other officers lower on the ladder would be advanced to the next evaluation-rung. Although, this example is somewhat oversimplified, the process we described offered an easy way for a commanding officer to show progression on the fitness reports of his junior officers and senior petty officers. Showing progress, or "breaking out," is an important aspect of fitness reports because this is one of the primary things that promotion boards look at when deciding whether to advance an officer or chief petty officer to the next rank. Since all platoons will deploy at the same time under NSW-21, the institutionalized method of breaking an officer, chief, or first-class petty officer out of the pack on his fitness report will disappear—making it that much more difficult to ensure that a large group of junior officers and senior petty officers will be able to obtain the fitness report grades that they need to further their careers.

At first glance, one solution to this problem might lie in looking at how other naval communities, have addressed the very same issue. The only problem with making this comparison is that everyone on a ship, submarine, or in an air squadron deploys to

the same place and generally performs the same mission. In contrast under NSW-21, platoons and boat detachments will be literally spread to the four corners of the earth, while the commanding officer will be in only one place at a time. Thus, he will have more exposure to some platoons and less to others. Similarly, one platoon could be in a theater (i.e. CENTCOM) where there is a lot of action, while the other is in a sleepy hollow. When it comes time for evaluations, the commanding officer will have to answer the question of whether he should penalize an officer who had the unfortunate luck of being sent to where the action wasn't, while rewarding the officer whom he observed operating in a combat zone. As well, he will have to account for unequal access to himself and unequal performance based on regional location. Although examining how other communities have handled this problem in the past is a start, the correct solution must be unique to Naval Special Warfare.

In regard to a likely solution to the evaluation conundrum, evaluating individuals according to different evaluation periods is one possible way to short circuit the problems just discussed. Instead of comparing junior officers in CENTCOM with junior officers in PACOM, a CO could devise a system were he evaluates each set of junior officers separately. This solution would limit the pool, and eliminate the need for choosing between two individuals with circumstantially unequal accomplishments. Another possible solution is to rank the Lieutenants and senior petty officers in terms of the positions they fill within the squadron. Therefore, task element commanders might be graded higher than platoon commanders, and the task element chief would then be graded higher than the platoon chief. This solution would also reduce the level of competition by limiting the pool from within which the CO would have to draw his fitness rankings, thus, allowing him to concentrate a smaller number of individuals around his average fitness grades.

Whatever solution Naval Special Warfare adopts, it should not punish those individuals who have limited contact with the commanding officer and a disproportionately smaller share of the operational commitment because of regional location. Although the challenges NSW-21 poses to the evaluation process will create serious problems for Naval Special Warfare in terms of retention and morale if they go

un-addressed, as long as the community remains cognizant of the issue, and moves to address it proactively, then it should not become a significant hindrance in the future.

### 3. Detailing

The detailing issue is another potential challenge that initially will cause some pain in the community, but eventually will resolve itself. Under NSW-21, it will be more difficult to move individuals between deployable and non-deployable jobs: since under the old regime replacing an injured or troublesome platoon member was simply a matter of swapping one SEAL for another SEAL who happened to be filling a non-deployable billet at the Team. With NSW-21, all the individuals at the Team-level will be deployable, and if the Team is not able to replace an individual internally, then it will be forced to try and recruit a body from one of the non-deployable commands (i.e. the Training Detachments). Moving the person from command to command will require BUPERS to draft transfer orders for the individual. Although this involves another layer in the bureaucracy, it should not pose a major problem. Since all the commands in question—SEAL Teams, Group, and LOGSU—are in the same location, the process of transferring a person from one command to another is largely a paperwork drill. Although this assertion is not very comforting to the NSW-detailing staff in Millington, TN, the community will gain a better feel for how many individuals will need to be transferred from command to command in order to fill manning shortfalls after the NSW-squadron deployments begin. Barring a major catastrophe, one should not expect regular mass exoduses between the Teams, Groups, and LOGSUs. The number of individuals who will need to be transferred before their projected rotation dates should be small enough for the detailing staff to manage.

### 4. Funding and Manpower

The issue of additional funding for the extra individuals that will deploy with the NSW squadron and the cost of standing up and equipping the new SEAL Teams are also serious challenges to the success of the NSW-21 transformation. However, funding issues are out of Naval Special Warfare's hands. Besides lobbying and requesting additional funding, NSW has no control over the appropriations process. In addition, we have found in our research that Naval Special Warfare claimed that it could undertake the NSW-21 transformation with no additional funding. Unfortunately, this assertion has

been somewhat misinterpreted. Naval Special Warfare's funding claim was not meant to insinuate that NSW would not require additional funds to sustain the deployable NSW squadron concept. It only meant that Naval Special Warfare could undertake NSW-21's five initiatives, stand up the training detachments and LOGSUs on each coast, and support the *initial* deployments of Squadrons ONE and TWO with no additional funding. The purpose of Naval Special Warfare's claim that it could accomplish NSW-21 out of hide, so to speak, was meant to demonstrate that the community could initiate an organizational transformation with its existing resources and assets.

Another serious challenge over which Naval Special Warfare has equally little direct control concerns SEAL and SWCC manning shortfalls. Although NSW has some leeway when it comes to training, recruiting, and retaining SEALs and SWCCs, the bottom line is that there were barely enough operators to meet all of Naval Special Warfare's obligations *before* NSW-21. And in the short-term, there will remain barely enough of them after NSW-21. Given that it takes over two years to create a competent operator out of a SEAL or SWCC candidate, and that the CINCs' requests for special operations forces continues to increase, there is no clear answer to the manpower shortfall in Naval Special Warfare. Though the SEAL and SWCC manning issue is an ongoing conundrum, it is a non sequitur that manning shortfalls resulted from NSW-21. Manning issues will persist in the community as long as the list of obligations grows disproportionately to the size of the community.

### 5. …But That Isn't the Worst of It

The preceding discussion has addressed some challenges that Naval Special Warfare will face in the NSW-21 era. We have also discussed how they relate to NSW-21, and how they can be resolved under NSW-21. So far so good, but this does not mean the community has altogether avoided the shoals. Just beneath the inky waters, two crucial challenges lie waiting among the jagged rocks. One of these challenges tangentially concerns the manpower issue, but at its core seeks to sink one of the key NSW-21 themes that we have discussed throughout this thesis. The second challenge is even more insidious and, thus, far more dangerous. The first concerns the NSW-21 theme of creating a force that operates the same in both war and peace. But the second

has nothing to do with how NSW operators fight; rather it has everything to do with how they think.

## B. FIGHT HOW YOU TRAIN

One of the chief concerns with respect to NSW-21's effect on Naval Special Warfare's combat effectiveness is that the deployable squadron concept will lessen the community's ability to surge platoons and boat detachments. The notion of surging refers to the rapid deployment of military assets from CONUS during contingency or wartime operations to augment forces that are already in-theater. For example, the 10th Mountain Division, which is based in Fort Drum, NY, recently surged to Uzbekistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom. A surge of forces is essentially an unscheduled deployment from either the United States or another regional theater not engaged in the operation at hand.

The argument regarding the challenge that NSW-21 poses to the community's ability to surge its assets can be stated as follows: since an entire Team's complement of platoons will deploy at one time, and the success of sustaining the deployable squadron concept depends on one Team or Squadron being in one of the four six-month phases at any given time, it follows that if a CINC requires more than the squadron's complement of forces, then platoons sent from the United States would have to come from the Squadron on-deck to deploy. Although surging one or two platoons or boat detachments from the squadron in the SIT phase would solve the problem temporarily, when the time came for that squadron to deploy it would have to do so with less than its full complement of forces—thereby jeopardizing Naval Special Warfare's ability to sustain the two-year squadron deployment model.

Although the reader would be correct in presuming that under the old regime that surging platoons was easier, he or she would be incorrect in claiming that the old organizational strategy—where each Team trained, equipped, and deployed its forces separately— would have allowed Naval Special Warfare to have had a six-plus SEAL platoon presences in-theater for an *extended* period of time. If a wartime or contingency effort does not allow for deployed east coast assets to augment west coast assets and vice versa, and surging platoons or detachments from CONUS is the only option, then in a

protracted campaign, Naval Special Warfare will not be able to sustain a theater presence beyond what its current manpower, fiscal, and equipment constraints allow, regardless of the community's deployment plan. Yes, perhaps under the old regime the community had a bit more flexibility to surge assets. However, over the long-term, the old organizational strategy was just as lacking in a sustained overseas presence beyond the current six-platoon per coast requirement as will be NSW-21.

On the other hand, NSW-21 does not preclude the community's ability to surge assets for rapid short-term actions. Although the squadron in SIT will face losing a few assets during its work-up, come deployment time the forces it surged before its scheduled deployment date likely will be extended to ensure that the squadron's combat readiness will not be degraded. Though extending assets beyond the six-month deployment threshold is not desirable, in a time of crisis it is the only viable solution given current NSW constraints. Perhaps the old regime made the administrative requirements for surging platoons and detachments a bit easier; however, the reality that assets might need to be left overseas for several months in addition to their original six-month deployment will continue to exist under NSW-21. That is, at least until the boundaries of the community's manning and budgetary constraints are widened.

The second problem with respect to NSW-21's effect on the community's ability to surge platoons is that it ignores a major objective of NSW-21. A theme that we have reiterated throughout this thesis is that NSW-21 seeks to create a model that Naval Special Warfare can operate within in both peace and war. Surging assets was not, and never should have been, a consideration for the architects of NSW-21. The NSW-21 architects set out to design a force package that was highly interoperable and capable of being task-oriented to meet the needs of two CINCs. The NSW squadron is just such a force package.

The ability to surge platoons and boat assets would be a non-issue if only Naval Special Warfare could increase the size of the squadrons. However, this solution is not as simple as it sounds. It would come at the cost of cutting the number of personnel in the existing platoons, reducing standards at BUD/S, or reducing the number of individuals assigned to the training detachments and LOGSUs. None of these solutions is either

attractive or advisable; more platoons and detachments with less equipment and training is a recipe for disaster. Nevertheless, the CINCs are asking Naval Special Warfare for SEALs and SWCCs to do more and more. There must come a point when NSW says, "This *and* no more."

The NSW-squadron was designed to create a unit that would train like it would fight. It was not designed to expand Naval Special Warfare's already substantial regional commitments. A deployable unit designed to function in both peace and war should not be augmented to support ancillary missions when it is already over-tasked, except in the direst of circumstances. If Naval Special Warfare finds itself in a situation where such dire conditions do not exist but it is, nonetheless, still ordered to surge additional platoons and detachments, then it should re-examine what are its true missions. If it does not consider these to be preeminent, but instead responds whenever requested for no matter what, then the fabric of the community will begin to unravel: irrespective of what organizational strategy Naval Special Warfare adopts. If the NSW squadron is the community's war-fighting component of the future, then it and the kind of *war* being fought should be the primary considerations when determining how and when to use NSW assets. For the NSW squadron concept to be effective, Naval Special Warfare should do everything in its power to adhere to the original NSW-21 plan, which sought to create a force that could easily transition from a peacetime to a wartime posture.[1] And the community should only deviate from this if absolutely necessary.

## C. THE MIGHTIEST WEAPON IS THE MIND

Much of the talk about the current war on terrorism has to do with unconventional warfare and special operations. Yet few journalists, talking heads, or even policymakers actually take the time to consider what makes special operators unique. Among the uninformed, there is a common misperception that Navy SEALs, Green Berets, and other

[1] Although this sentence sounds like NSW-21 was designed to allow for a seamless transition from a training posture to a fighting posture, the *real* meaning of this sentence is that NSW-21 is trying to establish an organizational strategy that allows NSW to quickly switch from real-world, peacetime missions (such as FID, maritime interdiction operations, and reconnaissance) to real-world, wartime missions. It should be noted that peacetime operations often only vary from wartime missions insofar as the levels of risk and the greater frequencies of operations during war. The key point here is that the environment NSW operates in is on the edge of peace. The best expression we can come up with to characterize this type of missions is the idea of "operating under the radar." Whether this is a helpful expression or not, we'll leave it to the reader to decide. In any event, just remember that in low intensity conflicts, the ebb and flow between war and peace is not so obvious.

special operators are human beings of epic proportion. The American public is constantly fed Hollywood images of rough-n-tumble individuals, who kick down doors, drink beer, and kill bad guys, as if those are things that God put them on this Earth to do. With grace and a cool smile, they always seem to dodge bullets and escape unscathed from seemingly impossible predicaments. Can anyone blame the average American for believing that special operators are an army of supermen in battlefield fatigues? In reality, the personnel of the United States Special Operations Command are just as mortal as anyone else. They live, breath, bleed, and die just like their conventional counterparts.

Sure, SEALs and SWCCs are among the best-trained and equipped fighting men in the United States' military arsenal. However, this fact in and of itself is not what makes them unique. A well-funded unit with access to superior training facilities that lacks an unconventional mindset is not a special operations unit. In fact, it is nothing more than a highly capable conventional force: an F-22 with a rucksack and a rifle, if you will. The thing that separates Naval Special Warfare from traditional conventional units is that it has historically fostered an environment where creative thinking has flourished. The ability to approach new problems, and old problems in new ways defines the core of the Naval Special Warfare operator.

When we discussed the human factor of NSW's discrete dynamic environment in Chapter III, we mentioned that Naval Special Warfare has tended to push decision-making down to the lowest levels possible. This aspect of the community has allowed Naval Special Warfare's junior officers and enlisted personnel a degree of autonomy that is unprecedented in more conventional units. By allowing lower-ranking personnel to make key tactical decisions, the community has created an environment in which fresh ideas are born from the bottom up. Since those at the lower ranks are the people who are tasked with going down-range, they are subsequently the individuals with the most to lose on a mission. Special operations are, by definition, the most complex and dynamic missions in the military. Such missions do not lend themselves to conventional notions of following doctrine and sticking to the plan at all costs. In fact, quick-minded and creative decision-makers on the ground often determine a mission's success or failure. Thus, Naval Special Warfare's success in the past may well have been *because* of a lack

of rigid doctrine, not in spite of it. And herein lies the greatest threat to the success of NSW-21.

The five initiatives that we discussed in Chapter IV all have one thing in common: they seek to standardize and centralize Naval Special Warfare overall by shifting from a platoon to a squadron focus. A fair question to ask is, "What effect will an increase of senior leadership at the tactical level have on the platoons and boat detachments?" If the reader were to stop reading right now, he or she might think not too much, since we haven't made this an issue up to this point. But an argument can and will be made that there is nothing inherent to NSW-21 that precludes micro-management of the platoons and detachments. In fact, an increase in senior leadership overseas might well increase the likelihood of micromanagement. And worse, once Naval Special Warfare begins to slide down this slippery slope, then it may not be able to extricate itself without damaging its uniquely creative nature.

To clarify this point, let us perform a little thought exercise. Imagine that you are a commanding officer of a SEAL Team—perhaps you already are one or you have been one. And now remember back to the pre-NSW-21 days when someone in your position wouldn't have deployed. How involved would he have been in the tactical decisions of the platoons or detachments deployed from his command? Probably not that much. However, you, as a squadron CO, finally get to deploy. You'll be on the front lines—and, for the first time since you've been an O-3. You're an operator again. But you, along with your XO, OPS, and CMC, are the tactical battle staff while deployed, not the shooters. You understand that. You also understand that it is up to you to come up with how exactly you're going to run your battle staff. Depending on your past experiences and commands, you'll probably have your own way of defining the role of your headquarters element. Whether your way is right or wrong really doesn't matter. The point is that it is up to you to determine how involved you will be with your platoons. Great, you think, finally, things are being done the way they should be. And, given your experience, temperament, and confidence in your chiefs and platoon commanders, you're probably right. For you have the best squadron in the Teams, you know the value of learning from your mistakes, and you trust your people. Micromanagement is completely

a non-issue for you and your squadron. However, what about the squadrons that aren't like yours?

NSW-21 leaves the decision regarding how involved the squadron's senior leadership will be in the actions of the platoons and detachments in the hands of the squadron's commanding officer. However, this is also the reason why a squadron CO who is the opposite of the ideal one we described above has the potential of becoming a meddlesome micromanager under NSW-21. Although a squadron that has significant problems requires a degree of micromanagement, we do not have to try very hard to envision a bureaucratic scenario in which micromanagement runs rampant, whether the situation requires it or not. Although we are in no way insinuating that micromanagement is already running amuck in Naval Special Warfare, or that NSW-21 will exacerbate the problem, we are arguing that under NSW-21 even the hardest charging, deck-plate CO must pause to consider the ramifications of becoming too involved in the decision-making processes of his junior officers.

If creative thinking is the thing that separates Naval Special Warfare from other conventional units, then the community must preserve those aspects that allow creative thinking to flourish. We have argued that the environment of the NSW operator requires creative thinkers, which tended to force decision-making down to the junior officer level. Under the OOS, the need for junior officers to make decisions overseas fostered an environment in which they had no other choice but to be creative thinkers. The more junior officers are challenged to solve tough problems, to which there are no doctrinal answers, early in their careers, the more likely it is that they will be able to continue to do so as they rise in rank. Conversely, a junior officer who is not encouraged to think creatively will not grow into a senior officer who can be imaginative.

Naval Special Warfare is fortunate to have some of the most creative and dynamic minded senior officers in the military. Although this compliment is as much a testament to their abilities as it is to the Naval Special Warfare ethos, had these sorts of individuals not been attracted to the NSW community, then the community would not have the unconventional problem-solving capability that it has today. Simply put, if NSW-21 stifles creative thought by junior officers and enlisted personnel by creating an

environment in which senior leadership forms and dictates fighting doctrine, then Naval Special Warfare will not only drive creative thinkers within the community out, it will also do a grave disservice to the individuals who remain in the organization. If under NSW-21, senior Naval Special Warfare leadership prevents operators, and particularly the junior officers, from making mistakes and making decisions when confronted by ambiguous situations, then they will not prepare those officers to do so when they take the community's reins.

Under NSW-21, Naval Special Warfare must be vigilant and prevent the community from slipping into the risk-averse and zero-defects morass that many conventional units are now trying to crawl out of. Good order and discipline do not equal increased doctrinal regulations imposed from on high. One theme regarding NSW-21 that came up time and time again during our interviews is that the one aspect of NSW-21's implementation process that will make it a success is that WARCOM has given senior Naval Special Warfare commanding officers and commodores general guidance and the power to work out the details for executing the plan for their commands as they see fit. We would submit that for NSW-21's continued success, this sort of delegation of critical responsibilities and trust also must flow down to the operators. NSW-21's centralized and standardized model does not have to result in a conventionalized force, as long as all of Naval Special Warfare's personnel remember NSW-21's ultimate goal: we must not just do the job well, but we must *try* to do it better. And doing that job better means not just putting control of deployed Naval Special Warfare's assets into the hands of senior NSW leadership, but also preserving the unconventional mindset that makes the NSW operator special in the first place.

## D. CONCLUSION

> "—Heart of hearts, were it more, more would be laid at your feet." (Joyce, p. 24)

We began this project by posing a paradoxical question between NSW-21 and the mainstream theories of the information age—as well as stating that the only way to overcome this paradox is by looking for the answer in other places than existing organizational models. Had we constrained ourselves to just using Mintzberg's theory, or

any general model for that matter, we would have embraced the "one size fits all" approach to bureaucratic reorganization that we sought to avoid. Essentially, we would have searched for an answer in vain. The reason why we wanted to eschew this approach is that 1) we had trouble finding a general theory that could adequately explain the reasons behind NSW-21, and 2) NSW-21 was not developed according to a general theory. Perhaps instinctively and not always consciously, the framers of NSW-21 looked at the community and not at the textbooks when they developed their plan.

Consequently, we decided to take a different approach to reach our original objectives of 1) providing a broad understanding of NSW-21 and its implications, 2) explaining why NSW-21 was a smart move for the Naval Special Warfare community, and 3) using Naval Special Warfare's recent transformation endeavors as a means to understand how and why groups must organize, reorganize, and transform themselves in order to meet the challenges of the future. We believe that since NSW-21 is a unique transformation effort designed and tailored by individuals within the Naval Special Warfare community, that fact makes this transformation truly revolutionary.

Nowhere in the NSW-21 story do we find flow-charts and two-by-two matrices ginned up by over-priced "business consultants," or the cryptic "techno-babble" of shortsighted technophiles and wide-eyed futurists—who earnestly believe that they have the uncanny ability to divine the futures of organizations to which they do not even belong. In fact, the story of NSW-21 is one of change motivated and conceived in the most unlikely, but logical, of places—from within the organization itself. This being said, it should come as no surprise that neither NSW-21 nor Naval Special Warfare fit neatly into either Mintzberg's, or for that matter anyone else's, model. NSW-21 is an organizational strategy that was molded to fit Naval Special Warfare's environment: an environment that includes the unique missions, interests, and values that characterize maritime special operations.

When commenting about another American governmental bureaucracy, columnist Ralph Peters puts it this way, "Our strategic approach must be situational, though shaped in each separate case by our national interests and informed by our core values" (2001, p. 10). Mr. Peters was writing about the United States Executive's approach to smart

foreign policy. But his words make exceedingly good sense for the study of organizations as well. As with foreign policy—which deals with the interaction of human beings on the political level—organizational analysis is concerned with the study of human beings at the corporate and military levels. Regardless of the context, the thing that drives and defines both is basically the same: human behavior.

The only way to accurately speculate about an organization and how it operates is to form a model that is unique to that system. This is the situational approach, which formed the basis of our reinterpretation of Mintzberg's theory. As regards, Naval Special Warfare, "Who is better equipped to deal with the possible challenges of Naval Special Warfare's discrete dynamic environment than the NSW leaders who have been steeped in it and devoted their lives to improving the organization?" Yes, the "outside consultant," who makes his living by telling others how he thinks things should be, would argue that an outside perspective is the best source for *truly* objective analysis of how a potentially flailing or stagnant organization should do its business. However, how much can they really figure out about the organization in a matter of weeks or even months?

In any event, the NSW-21 transformation was neither a desperate measure nor an ill-conceived plan that was conjured up by an organization on the brink of irrelevance and in the midst of a crisis. Instead, it was a gambit by an organization that has never backed down from a challenge. Perhaps NSW-21 is not perfect, but its inherent strengths lie in the fact that those who conceived the plan are now also willing to live it. NSW-21 is testimony to the notion that substantive organizational transformations can only come about when those within the organization choose to embrace change rather than fear it.

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